

Pluck and Luck

COMPLETE STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York Post Office, by Frank Tousey.

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NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 6, 1899.

Price 5 Cents.



ROBINSON CRUSOE, JR.

BY JAMES C. MERRITT.



and upon a small rock, where the waves had thrown him, wedged in a crevice as in a vise.
Over him towered the massive body of the ferocious lion.

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CHAPTER I.

THE BURNING SHIP.

The Hercules was a magnificent trading vessel of 800 tons burden, commanded by Captain Fred Coffin, with two masted, and a crew of fifteen foremast men.

Bound from New York to the African gold coast, laden with a miscellaneous cargo, she had touched at Monrovia, Liberia, on her way homeward, to take some additional freight, in the form of several cages of wild beasts.

They were sent by the agents of a famous circus, and when the hatches were finally closed, the Hercules set sail.

The morning of the 10th of June, 1870, found the ship under a full head of canvas, going out of the Gulf of Guinea, at the rate of ten knots an hour, as a stiff, whole sail breeze was blowing from northeast by east.

The captain stood by the weather bulwarks amidships, and was smoking a pipe and quizzing a youth who stood beside him.

The boy was about seventeen years of age, attired in a dapper costume that proclaimed him to be the captain's clerk, and had a strong, well-knit figure, a sun-burned face and blue eyes.

"Then you're all alone in the world, are yer, Bob?" the old sea-dog was saying, as he rubbed his grizzled beard reflectively.

"Ay, sir," replied the youth, "all alone. I have not got a single relation. I was born in New York in 1853, of poor parents. All of my ancestors were sailors back two hundred and thirty-eight years. My great grandfather was Alexander Selcraig, the one who made the island of San Juan Fernandez famous——"

"What, Robinson Crusoe?"

"So he was called by Daniel De Foe. At any rate, when I was fourteen I ran away from school and went to sea. On my return I was bitterly punished, for I found that my parents had died ignorant of what had become of me. Since then I have followed a sea-faring life with a fascination I can't resist."

"It's born in the bone!" commented the captain, puffing at his pipe.

"No doubt, sir. And now, sir, what is our latitude?"

The captain glanced around at the sunlit sea, then up at the clear blue sky, which was flecked with fleecy white clouds.

"Mus' be at a reckonin' which'd be a juncture o' ther Agulhas an' ther great Atlantic equatorial currents," he replied.

"Isn't this the commencement of the Mexican Gulf stream, sir?"

"No. Ther trade winds o' ther Indian Ocean drives a current ter ther east'ard coast o' Africa, north o' Madagascar, where it divides an' passes south'ard aroun' ther Cape o' Agulhas. Then it comes up here, five miles an hour, rushes west'ard, an' jines the equatorial current, crossin' ter So' America. There it bends north'ard, at 5 deg. so' latitude, an' enters ther Gulf o' Mexico. Heated by the tropical sun o' two continents, it goes on through ther Straits of Floridy, wi' force enough ter drive it up ther coast, an' across ther ocean to Norway an' ther Azores."

"Then the current we are in will help us along?"

"Ay—it will, my lad. But hark! Wot's that?"

There sounded a blood-curdling roar down between decks.

"Oh, it's Shadrach, the lion, stowed away up forward, sir. He is a fierce beast and always seems to be hungry. How long will it take us to reach the other side, captain?"

"Dependin' on wind an' weather holdin' favorable," replied the skipper, "an' this current a-helpin' us, we oughter strike ther Wes' Indies ten days sooner'n we came."

At this juncture the first mate, John Sawyer, approached.

He was a surly fellow with a red face, red hair and a red mustache.

Nobody liked him on board and he seemed to hate every one, but he was a skilled navigator and a good seaman, so retained his position.

"Waal, Sawyer, wot's up now?" queried Captain Coffin.

"Chips, the carpenter, sez that the saims in the garboord sthreaks is started agin, sor, an' we're takin' in wather," he replied in gruff tones as he took a chew of tobacco.

The captain frowned.

It was a nasty leak which had troubled the ship since she was built, as the strong teak-wood had in that spot been put on green, and, having shrunk, would not swell over the calking as it should have done.

"There is on'y one thing to be did," said the captain, presently, "an' that's ter git the hull o' this vessel copper-bottomed when we reaches port. Tell Chips ter drive in Dutchmen, Mr. Sawyer, an' we'll git along the best we kin. I'll go down an' see it."

The mate saluted and walked away followed by the skipper a moment later, as Coffin felt anxious about the leak.

Having nothing better to do, Bob Selcraig went down below and passed an hour feeding the animals.

They consisted of a lion, a panther and a tiger, all full grown, and, being fresh from the African jungles, were a most ferocious trio of magnificent but terrible beauties.

When Rob went up on deck again, the sun was setting on the western horizon, and five bells (half past six) sounded.

From deck to truck, the Hercules was a mass of white canvas, all the stay sails, courses, and top sails being set.

The sea had on a good roll, making the ship toss enough to make the sailors on deck walk with stretched legs.

To the windward though, a dark hazy streak had come up, and the lookout observed a dim speck on the port bow, which they made out to be Ascension Island, latitude 7 degrees 55 minutes 55 seconds south, and west longitude 14 degrees 25 minutes 5 seconds.

The man in the bow had just communicated his discovery, after going up to the forecourse yard truss, with a glass, when there sounded a frightful crash, up forward, and the captain, the first mate and the carpenter came rushing up the forecastle companion way stairs, with pale faces, Chips shouting vociferously, "Fire! Fire! The ship's on fire!"

In an instant Captain Coffin struck the carpenter a blow of anger at his stupidity, for alarming every one so, and knocked him prostrate upon the deck.

Every one had heard that fatal cry, though, and a panic ensued, which was augmented a moment later by the crew of the watch on deck observing huge volumes of smoke come pouring up from every crack, crevice, hatchway, and door on deck.

Wild cries of alarm at once filled the air, and with blanched faces the men made a rush for the boats.

But Captain Coffin was not going to permit anything like that; so drawing his revolver he ran across the deck and cried in threatening tones as he brandished the weapon:

"Back! Back to yer posts every one o' yer, or by Heaven I'll shoot you down! D'yer hear! Come back, I tell yer!"

This direful threat seemed to have the desired effect.

The men paused irresolutely.

"Now see here," shouted the skipper, determinedly, just as Rob glided over to his side; "ther fire's only jist started and we may save the ship if we loses no time. Arm y selves wi' axes an' scuttle the decks, so we can throw de water. Some o' yer hurry down the canvas, so's it w git burned."

He then ordered the men what else to do, and taking courage by his fearless and intrepid action, they set to work with a will to obey his orders, for a frightful fate stared them in the face.

The captain then explained that he, Chips and Sawyer had gone below to examine the leak by the aid of a lantern.

A cask of rum stood near by, and the lamp having been fastened in the lantern very insecurely, had fallen out into the liquid. The burning barrel had been upset in their eagerness to extinguish the flames, and the fire immediately spread all over. It had occurred in the midship section of the lower hold near the hatchways, and the flames communicating with the bulkheads had set fire to them in a twinkling.

Then the three men had come up to spread the alarm.

There is nothing worse than a ship on fire, for they battled at a terrible disadvantage to save the few planks floating between themselves and eternity.

The decks were scuttled, and water was poured down in tons, but seemed to do no good, as long as the burning liquid could float on its surface, despite the violent work of the frightened sailors, whom Coffin had divided into three gangs.

Each gang was under an officer's direction.

And to add to the horror of the situation, the animals down between decks commenced to roar and howl with fright.

The decks grew hot, the pitch began to melt and run out of the seams—smoke was growing in its density, and as the hatches had been thrown off, flames began to dart up through the apertures in huge, licking tongues, communicating with the masts. Each moment the horror of their situation grew worse.

They closed the hatches, in hopes of smothering the flames.

But it seemed to do no good, and, one of the masts catching fire, the flames shot up along the tarred ropes with frightful rapidity, and they were obliged to go aloft to save the rigging of the fore and mizzen, while some of the men chopped down the mainmast and sent it by the board.

The smoke was choking the men, blackening their faces, and growing unbearable—the heat was becoming frightful, and their violent exertions rapidly exhausting them.

The sun sunk out of sight, the shadows of twilight fell, and the moon arose in the solemn sky, big, full and red.

Captain Coffin saw despair written upon the faces of his unhappy men, and at last began himself to think that saving the ship from destruction was utterly hopeless.

He ordered them to desist and clear away the boats, get all the food and water they could lay hands on, and prepare to abandon the burning vessel.

At this juncture, Rob Selcraig hurried up to the despairing skipper.

"There is one chance left," hoarsely cried the boy. "I have been below, and saw that the fire has confined itself to one side. Close all the hatches again, give me a few men, and we will go below and scuttle the ship. She will not sink if we let the sea in above the water line. But you will have to send both masts over on the starboard side, to heel her over and let the water in. If the fire is quenched, you can have the masts sent by the board to put her on an even keel again to stop further ingress of the water."

"That'll leave us dismantled!" gasped Coffin.

"It is our only hope, though," replied the boy.

"Then we'll try it!"

Men were called, and four of them volunteered to go with the boy, while others began to chop the two remaining masts down.

Armed with axes, Rob and the four men went down in the choking smoke to the forecastle, and getting between decks through the forward bulkhead, they passed the roaring and snarling beasts and reached the midships section.

The smoke and heat here were frightful, but they set to work like heroes, and their glittering axes cut through the hard wood until several large breaches were made.

This was no sooner accomplished than there came a thunderous crash up on deck, as one of the masts fell, and the ship careened, the sea water rushed in, and the five brave fellows, more dead than alive, groped their way back to the forecastle.

To their horror they found that the bulkhead door had closed, a plank having fallen against it on the other side, and had become wedged there.

They resorted to their axes again to cut their way out, but the inpouring water raised a dense smoke, that blinded and choked them, and one by one they fell senseless to the floor.

On deck a frightful scene had ensued.

Seeing no cessation of the fire, after the influx of water succeeded the falling of the two masts, the sailors clamored to depart in the boats.

Brave Captain Coffin, seeing no sign of the five men returning, was reluctantly compelled to believe that they had perished, and not wishing to sacrifice the lives of any more of his men, after waiting a reasonable time for their return, at last acceded. The boats then dropped from the davits, and they pulled away from the burning ship toward Ascension Island, leaving the ship to its fate.

CHAPTER II.

A DREADFUL DISEASE.

Rob Selcraig was the only one of the five unfortunates who had gone below who did not succumb to the smoke and heat.

Seeing that his messmates, exhausted by their former exertions, had fallen upon the floor unconscious, he kept on raining a shower of blows on the wedged door with his ax.

It finally fell, and he immediately dragged his helpless companions into the forecastle, and braced the broken door up again in its place with the plank.

The forecastle was not as bad as between decks.

Rob was almost exhausted, but he did not stop there, for he knew that unless he got the senseless men on deck into the air they would perish in the strangling smoke.

It was fortunate he was a strong boy, else he could not have dragged the men up to the deck one by one.

But he finally succeeded, and then took a rest.

His clothing was torn, his hands and face cut, smeared with dirt and bleeding; but he did not notice it then.

Glancing around the deck for the first time he noticed that the ship had been deserted by the crew.

The absence of the boats told him the tale of his peril.

"Great Heaven!" he groaned with blanching cheeks.

"They have taken to the boats while we were below, and left us to our fate."

As this horrible truth dawned upon him he sprang to his feet, and rushing to the bulwarks glanced over the sea.

Afar in the distance he beheld four tiny objects, almost out of sight in the fast gathering darkness, rising and falling on the waves, and he knew that they were the quarter boats.

"It is strange!" he muttered in tones of desperation. "How could Captain Coffin do it? But he must have imagined we perished down below, as we did not return as soon as we scuttled the ship."

Then he ran back to his senseless companions, and getting some water from a cask he essayed to revive them, almost forgetting the raging hell gutting the ship beneath his feet, in his anxiety to save their lives and restore their senses.

One of the men was John Sawyer, the first mate, and the other three were Danes and a Swede.

The boy worked assiduously at them, and finally had the extreme satisfaction of reviving them, one after the other.

They almost relapsed into insensibility again when he apprised them of how they were abandoned on the burning ship.

They then began to devise a means of making a raft of the two fallen masts, hanging over the starboard quarter, holding the ship on her beam ends, when Rob exclaimed:

"No, no! Look! After all we may be saved. See! There are no flames now—only smoke. The water pouring in through the holes in the side has succeeded in quelling the spread of the fire. Do not despair—we will have the old hulk left. If we touch the masts the water will cease pouring in and the fire will break out again."

Thrilled with hope at Rob's words, they uttered a faint cheer and waited a while longer, after which they lifted the hatches.

Smoke poured out in vast clouds, but not a spark of fire was seen.

It had been completely extinguished.

There was, however, danger of the ship filling and sinking.

To obviate such a catastrophe, Rob cut away the wreck of the masts, and they fell into the sea with a splash.

By this time the moon had risen over the wide waste of water, and shed an effulgence of silvery light on the dismantled ship.

Relieved of the weight of the masts, the *Hercules* righted herself, and the water ceased to flow in through the scuttled sides.

The quarter boats had vanished from sight long before, making for Ascension Island as fast as they could go.

The ship was then in the grasp of the great equatorial current, and was moving along at a sluggish rate.

All night long the unfortunate survivors remained on deck, watching the smoke pour up from the hold, and when daylight came, they went below and patched up the holes they had cut in the planking of the side, to keep out the seas.

An examination of the hold showed them that it contained ten feet of water, and that the fire had ruined the cargo so that not a thing was available save for ballast.

Luckily it had not done much more than burn the surface of the planking and timbers, else any wave might have stove a hole in the sides and sent them to the bottom anyway.

Having found plenty to eat and drink on board and partaken of all they needed, the pumps were manned and the water drawn out of the hold.

The lion, tiger and panther were yet alive, and made the air hideous with their incessant cries and gnashing of teeth, for the fire had frightened them very badly.

When the water was all pumped out of the hold, they found the leak which Chips had reported, and stopped it up.

They were now in comparative safety.

Yet there was no means of guiding the ship, and they could only drift on in the ocean current in hopes that some passing vessel would pick them up and carry them to port.

Command of the ship was deferred to John Sawyer from the beginning, Rob working in common with the rest.

Sawyer had said nothing, but the others seemed to be very grateful to the boy for saving their lives from the fire and smoke.

"There is only one thing to be feared now," said Rob to the surly first mate, "and that is a simoon storm. If once it should strike us the seams would open, after the fire having heated and run the pitch and tar out, and she would fill and sink with no hope for salvation."

"Then kape yer information to yerself," growled the mate; "I knows it, but shure yer naidn't be afther demoralizin' me min, be frightenin' thim wid wot hasn't happened."

Several days passed uneventfully by, during which Rob took care to feed the three caged beasts down between decks.

Seeing this, the mate told him to do so no longer, and threatened to have the animals thrown into the sea.

"No man knows how long we may have ter remain on board av ther wreck," said he severely; "an' as ther captain

an' crew tuck half o' our provisions, we may naid all we've got afore this voyage is ended, an' more, too."

Thenceforth Rob was restrained from feeding the animals, and their hungry cries grew dreadful to hear.

The mate did not offer to throw them overboard after that, as he said that should the provisions give out, they might utilize their flesh for food; so the unhappy beasts, growing more violent every day, were kept confined in their cages to starve.

A week of unaltered good weather ensued, the wreck creeping along on the current about three miles an hour to the west.

On the following Sunday one of the Danish sailors was taken sick, and an hour afterward his companion followed. Before the afternoon came the Swede succumbed, and a horrible fear seized Sawyer and Rob as they went below and looked at the men.

They were weak, depressed, their eyes bloodshot, their gums swollen and bleeding, and blotches appeared all over them.

Fever had set in, and one was becoming delirious.

"There's no doubt of it," whispered Rob, as they hastily left the forecabin together, "they have got either the purpura or scurvy."

"Heaven help us thin," groaned the mate, "for we'll get it, too."

"We must try to fight against it, Mr. Sawyer. Lemon juice and potatoes are curatives. Will you help me?"

"No! I won't go near ther likes av thim!"

"Then I'll doctor the poor fellows myself, sir!"

"Do it if yer loikes," growled the mate, "but it's meself as don't want ter be afther catchin' it from thim, at all."

Rob cast a scornful glance at the selfish man who would leave his unfortunate messmates to perish for want of a little care, and left him to go to the cabin.

Captain Coffin had a medicine chest in his room, and securing some castor oil, and some chloride of lime, Rob procured some lemons, and went down in the forecabin again.

That night Sawyer was taken down with the disease on deck in spite of having kept away from the three sick men.

Scurvy is a blood disease—the life fluid becoming impoverished by privation of flesh, succulent vegetables.

Rob did all he could to relieve the pain of the sufferers, but they crawled out on deck no better, and the boy himself was taken sick.

He got in the caboose on deck, and as the night advanced he saw that Sawyer was getting mad with delirium.

A few hours before daybreak the mate was staggering about the deck in a raging fever, with bursting eyeballs, and blood gushing from his gums as they kept swelling.

He was screaming incoherently, and in a frenzy sprang upon the bulwarks, plunged into the sea, and perished.

One of the Danes had crawled into the scuppers, where he laid like a log; the other crouched in a sitting position against the stump of the mizzen-mast, and the Swede laid on the anchor cable, up forward in the bows, fast losing his senses.

Rob was very weak, and could only minister to his own wants.

He lay in the caboose two days, eating lemons and raw potatoes.

Then his health began to return, and he crawled out to aid the others.

He gave them water and all the lemons and potatoes he could find, but they were beyond recovery, and died where they were.

The once beautiful Hercules was transformed into a pest ship.

The corpses of the poor fellows were shriveled up, their skins yellow and scaly, their eyes bursting from the sockets, and the skin shrunk back from their mouths, showing all their teeth in an awful grin.

It was a terrible sight for the poor boy to endure.

And a terrible situation to be placed in.

All alone on a dismantled wreck gutted by fire, and turned into a charnel house by a dreadful disease, with no one but the stiffened bodies of his dead messmates for companions!

And falling upon his knees on the deck, in the mellow moonlight, he raised his eyes and his clasped hands heavenward and asked his Maker was he to be delivered from his awful bondage.

CHAPTER III.

THE TEMPEST.

Adrift at the mercy of the wind and the waves, Rob Selcraig was in a deplorable condition on the wreck.

The tenth day after the fire dawned, and found him yet very weak, but rapidly recovering his health.

The boy had not sighted a sail during the whole period.

A most terrible stench began to pervade the wreck, coming from the dead bodies of his unlucky messmates, and weak as he was, he made up his mind to heave them overboard.

Their bodies looked wasted to the very bones, and were in shrunk-up postures; the one in the scuppers, indeed, was in a bad state.

It was a sickening task, but the boy performed it with many shudders, for as one of the bodies went overboard it literally fell to pieces, its clothing being all that held it together.

Freed of the presence of the loathsome objects, Rob breathed easier.

Another day passed, and the sky grew dark and threatening.

Down below the three caged beasts of prey were continuing their shocking cries of hunger, augmented in intensity ten-fold.

To relieve their suffering Rob opened a coop of chickens and killing thirty of them he fed the raving beasts.

They gorged themselves with the food with all the ravenous avidity their starved condition had left them in.

But starved as they were it only served to whet their appetites, and the way they glared and snarled at the boy showed him very plainly that they would make short work

of him if they once got him in their clutches within the huge cage.

Their prison was made of iron and stood on two wooden horses against the bulkhead.

It was divided into three compartments, each of which held an animal, so that it could not reach its neighbor.

Then having done this deed of humanity Rob went up on deck again, and viewed the threatening sky with feelings of the most intense alarm.

It certainly portended a very bad storm before the night passed by, and Rob began to dread that the wreck could not ride it out.

His fears were not without foundation, for the patched-up holes in the side, and the started garboard strakes were not strong enough to withstand the pounding a storm would give them, should it come on to blow hard, and the waves to rise.

The boy did not know his locality just then, either.

Computing that the Hercules had made fifty miles from shore and that the ship made three miles an hour in the current, if it had stayed in it, for the past eleven days, he thought he must be about eight hundred miles from the African coast.

A glance at the mercury in the barometer in the cabin showed him that it was rapidly sinking; this was proof enough of a big blow, and all he could do was to commend his soul to the care of God, and await his fate.

The hours passed slowly by, until at last the storm burst with the most intense fury.

It was accompanied by thunder and lightning, and drove the seas up mountain high on all sides.

The wreck was swept along at the mercy of the tempest, every great roller making a breach over her.

Buffeted and tossed here and there, straining at every joint, rolling her decks under, or plunging her bowsprit in the mighty billows, she was like a mere sun fish in the grasp of a giant, as she had no canvas for steerage-way.

The seas beat down upon her decks with the crash of thunder, and every startling flash of lightning gleamed on a raging wave bursting against her weakened timbers.

The hatches were swept away, the bowsprit was snapped asunder like a pipe stem, and every sea that burst upon her deck drove a ton of water down into the hold filling her with more water every moment, until when she settled in the trough or was lifted on the crests, she sat buried to her deadlights in the waves.

Rob had taken up his quarters in the cabin on deck, laid on the floor clinging to a fastened table, and imagined that every terrific blow the seas dealt the wreck would be the last to drive her under the ocean forever.

An hour passed by, and then there came a furious crash down below that made Rob spring to his feet and rush out on deck, under the belief that the bottom had been knocked out of the ship!

She did not founder though, for the noise he heard had been made by the bulkhead falling down upon the lion's cage and smashing it to pieces.

A moment afterward Rob saw the panther rush up

through the fore-castle companionway to the deck, pursued by the tiger, and both of the beasts in a perfect fury.

The boy was clinging to the stump of the main-mast, and the incessant flashing of the lightning lit up the scene.

Then he beheld a most terrible incident.

The tiger reached the panther and sprang upon it, uttering a savage growl, when an awful combat ensued.

The starved beasts were bent upon devouring each other.

The fury of the storm did not seem to have much effect upon their fears in view of their maddening hunger.

They fought with awful fury, and were tearing each other to pieces, when a bellowing wave swept over the wreck and engulfing them, carried them away into the seething caldron with their fangs fastened in each other's throats!

Such a battle Rob had never dreamed of, as he clung for his life to the foot of the mast, deluged with water, and wondering at what moment a succeeding billow would drag him away into the remorseless sea.

For an instant he saw the beasts struggling in the waves, unrelaxed of their clutch upon each other; then the black pall settled down again, and they vanished from sight.

The boy had no idea whatsoever that he would escape with his life, for the wreck, he was sure, would go to pieces in a very short time.

Several moments of intense anxiety followed, then he heard the cabin go to pieces, and the debris was swept away.

This was followed by a roar close by him, and when the lightning gleamed, he saw Shadrach, the lion, clinging to the deck, its eyes glaring at him like live coals of fire.

An instant later the terrified beast sprang at him.

A wild cry pealed from the boy's lips, and he let go his hold on the mast and reeled out on the deck.

A tremendous wave caught him and he was lifted into the sea, struggling and frantic, and the wreck was borne away, leaving him nothing to depend upon.

He felt something touch his hand and seized it blindly.

Then he knew he had hold of the body of the lion, which too had been washed from the wreck into the sea.

Hurled here and there, utterly helpless, the boy gave himself up, for he knew he could not fight against death now.

His senses were fast deserting him, when a larger wave than any suddenly engulfed him. He was borne away on its howling crest, and then all became a blank.

Rob had lost his senses.

Time passed by, of which he had no knowledge.

But when the awakening came he imagined he must be dead—that what he saw was in another land.

He laid upon his back, the rain and mist beating down from the black vault of heaven, the sea still raging around him within a few feet on every side.

He was encompassed by water, and something was over him.

There came a most terrible blaze of forked lightning.

It vividly illumined the scene, and showed him his situation.

He laid upon a small rock, where the waves had probably thrown him, and was wedged in a crevice as if in a vise.

And over him towered the massive body of the ferocious

lion, which, too, had evidently been thrown upon the rock with himself.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MOUNTAIN IN THE SEA.

Rob Selcraig was hardly conscious enough to realize the peril of his position, when he saw Shadrach, the starved lion, standing over him on the rock in the sea.

It was evident that the waves had thrown them both there, for when Rob was hurled from the wreck of the *Hercules*, he had found the lion struggling in the waves beside him, and eagerly seized upon the body of the beast.

Had the boy not been wedged in a crevice in the rock, he certainly would have been swept into the stormy sea again.

He glanced at the lion and saw the beast just upon the point of burying its teeth in his body, when another wave rolled up, struck the lion, and in an instant it was thrown from the rock and swept away.

Rob was half drowned, but, the water passing on, he heard a din near by that rose above the noise of the storm.

As the lightning flashed he glanced around.

A cry of amazement burst from his lips.

He saw a mountainous object towering close by him, and saw land within a hundred yards of where he lay.

The rock upon which he had been cast was one of a chain of out-lying reefs that seemed to belt the shore, and the waves were bursting in huge breakers upon the reefs, throwing up a line of white, gleaming surf as far as the sight could reach.

The boy breathed a prayer of thankfulness for his salvation, and hastily strove to get out of the crevice into which he was wedged, as he heard another bellowing wave coming in with a rush upon the rock.

Just as he succeeded in liberating himself, the wave burst upon the rock, and he was knocked down on the other side, and carried toward the land like a bit of driftwood.

The moment his body touched the shore, he seized upon a jagged rock, and clung to it until the undertow receded.

The wind was blowing a terrific gale from the northeast, and produced a loud humming noise amid the reefs. The sound of the mountainous breakers dashing upon the reefs added to the din, and to his consternation he heard the roaring of the lion not far distant, which told him that the ravenous beast had succeeded in landing.

When the water receded, the fatigued boy ran up on the shore, out of reach of the waves, and as the lightning flashed again, he saw that the object which he had first seen was a huge mountain close by. He also saw trees and verdure all around, and he dragged himself to a sheltered nook, and throwing himself down, in an utterly dejected state of mind, he soon fell fast asleep.

All through that terrible night he was ever and anon aroused by the roaring of the lion, but toward day's dawn the sound became hushed and he rested easier.

The twelfth day after the ill-fated *Hercules* was set on fire then dawned; the sun rose in a cloudless sky, the tem-

pestuous sea subsided, and the gale abated to a soft gentle breeze.

The change had come like magic, for the storm had gone ahead on its raging course seeking other latitudes.

When Rob awoke he was filled with joyful amazement at the transition, and though feeling sick at heart, sore and bruised, stiff in the joints, and with hardly a shred of clothing left on his body, it was an infinite relief to discover himself yet alive.

"I wonder what that land can be?" he muttered as he arose and stretched his tired limbs. "It cannot be the main, so it certainly must be an island. But I will travel around and see. A walk will take the stiffness from my joints."

The place in which he stood was covered with rocks, and he saw that the ebbing tide had bared the reefs upon which he had been thrown by the waves.

They now stood out like grim, gaunt sentinels on the rugged coast, breaking the seas that rolled in.

Upon the ground was a carpet of a velvety kind of grass, and to the left was a thick belt of timber in which he was amazed to see myriads of birds of different varieties, all of which resembled the feathery tribes of Africa.

Added to this, he saw goats and sheep on the rocks, and in the woodland herds of deer of a soft brown color.

"If this is an island," he muttered, "it must certainly be inhabited, for those birds and beasts could not have gotten here on their own accord. And, oh—such a mountain!"

He went out on the sea shore to the right, and found a sandy beach upon which the surf was curling in.

It gave him a view of the mountain.

There were forests of low, stunted trees upon its sides, and the top was broken and rugged, a thousand feet above the sea.

Verdure was to be seen everywhere—the air was soft and fragrant—and a strange solitude pervaded everything.

"It is a volcanic island!" commented the boy. "There can be no mistake that yonder cone is an extinct crater."

He felt hungry and thirsty, and wondered how he was going to appease his craving when he found some shell fish on the shore, and eagerly partook of as many as he could eat.

Although an unsatisfactory meal it sufficed to quell his craving, and enervated him to go on exploring the island.

"This is the twelfth day," he muttered, as he set out. "The 22d of June, 1870. I must make a note of it. Who knows what date I may inscribe ere leaving here, or when my bones may find a resting-place upon the shores of this isle."

He had no regrets of home, being alone in the world, but he did not fancy the prospect of an enforced residence upon an island in the sea, out of the pale of civilization, as his unfortunate ancestor had done in the past.

Cheering himself, therefore, with the hope that he would be successful in finding the island inhabited, he made a detour of the place, from north to south, winding around the base of the mountain, which towered a thousand feet above him.

There was nothing but a bleak and barren, sandy and rocky shore on that side, and not a sign of humanity.

Then he computed that the island must be twenty miles in its circumference, which would make it about six and one half miles in diameter, and almost circular in form, save for indentations of bays and extensions of capes on the rugged coast line.

"Not a soul to be seen!" he said, dejectedly, as he sat down on a rock to rest a moment. "I am on a desert island. What a strange fatality! Robinson Crusoe, Junior!"

Such, indeed, seemed to be the case.

He was startled a moment later to hear the roaring of the lion, and saw the beast dash out of a cluster of bushes in pursuit of a fleet-footed goat near where he sat.

They vanished a moment later, however.

"He will be an enemy to be feared," muttered the boy, "for as long as he is alive I can apprehend death. If he don't kill me outright he will eat every animal on the island, and I will have nothing but such berries and fruits as I can see growing here upon which to subsist. How much better off than I am was my great grandfather. He had the wreck of his ship from which to get all such things as he needed. I have no resource at all, and if I wish to live I will have a hard time of it."

Keeping a sharp lookout for the lion he arose and proceeded on his tour of inspection and exploration.

The west side of the island was barren and rocky, the eastern side was densely wooded, grassy and covered with vegetation.

He found a silvery stream of ice cold water, sweet and clear, running down from the mountain side, and out of curiosity followed it to see where it emptied.

He came to a small lake on the margin of the woods and skirting its verdure-clad borders, he glanced across.

To his amazement he saw what looked like a miniature city, fallen to ruin on the other side, built upon a plain sweeping out from the margin of the lake.

The houses, hundreds in number, were one storied structures, and in back of them, standing on the crest of a precipice, was a huge white building, looking like an Egyptian temple with its carved pillars and massive masonry.

Filled with the glad thought that the island was inhabited, he skirted the lake and hurried toward the city.

But when he got there, he found that it was surrounded by a huge stone wall, half hidden in vines and palms.

Finding a gate, the door of which had fallen to decay, he hurried in and made a rapid search through the cluster of houses.

Not a soul was to be seen.

It was a dead city, overgrown with rank weeds and shrubbery, but had an aspect of having once been cared for.

Reaching the large building, he saw an obliterated inscription over the huge open door, amid the ponderous columns, and he read:

MICH***DE B*SCO,

Rey d*1 Mar,

Ono 17*3.

Wondering what it meant Rob entered a huge, gloomy hall, traversing the center of the building, and saw through

a side doorway that the huge room was furnished in that clumsy style of the 17th and 18th centuries, the most remarkable things being seen on all sides.

There seemed to be many things used in ancient days of a magnificent style, the gorgeous splendor of everything fairly dazzling the startled boy.

Upon the stone floors were faded rugs and carpets, at the windows hung exquisite tapestries, in niches stood beautiful sculptures, on the carved walls hung gold frames, holding faded but rare paintings, and in the huge fire-place were the remaining embers of a fire which once had burned there and left its ashes.

"This must have been the palace of a heathen king!" muttered Rob.

Such indeed it seemed, and he went in and touched a chair.

It crumbled to dust beneath the weight of his hand.

He was startled, and repeated the touch on other things.

Everything with which his hand came in contact seemed to melt.

Startled, he hurried from the great saloon, and crossing the hall, he entered a room on the other side.

Here a most ghastly surprise awaited him.

It was as large a room as the first, and its pillared walls were covered with strange carvings, looking like the hieroglyphics of the ancient Egyptians, such as are seen upon monoliths.

The apartment was evidently a dining-room.

A huge table of stone, covered with decayed cloths, and standing on curiously wrought legs, extended the length of the tremendous room.

Upon the table were many huge platters, goblets, flagons, dishes, cups, and bowls of metal, disordered, upset, and some on the floor.

The table was surrounded by heavy carved oaken chairs.

And every chair contained the skeleton of a man.

It was a terrible sight, looking like a demoniacal feast of the dead.

Some of the skeletons had collapsed, depositing themselves a mere heap of bones in the seat of the chairs, others retained their positions as if in the act of eating at the table, and not a few skulls and other bones lay scattered upon the floor near the chairs.

Beside every dish was a goblet, and a few remnants of the accouterments of the skeletons remained in the form of half-decayed boots, huge brass buckles, iron buttons, old flint-lock pistols, cutlasses, daggers and rusted metallic articles, probably contained at one time in their pockets.

At the head of the table was a larger chair than the rest, at which sat the intact skeleton of what must have been a monstrous sized man, one bony hand still holding a goblet on the table and the sightless eyes staring at the silent band before him.

The boy could not stand the horrible sight any longer, and rushed out into the gloomy hall. He did not notice a broad flight of stairs ahead of him until he tripped and fell down them head foremost.

CHAPTER V.

DOWN IN THE CRYPT.

The flight of stairs down which Rob tumbled was broad and steep, but did not descend more than twenty feet. When he reached the bottom, he was bumped, bruised and badly shaken up, but in nowise seriously injured.

"Confound my carelessness!" he muttered, scrambling to his feet and rubbing his head, "where have I landed now?"

He glanced around and found himself in a huge corridor under the house, the walls braced up with the same kind of pillars he had seen up-stairs.

Determined to explore it and seeing daylight ahead, he hurried forward over a stone floor and reached a window cut in the face of the cliff upon the summit of which the palace had been erected.

There were rusty iron bars set in the window, and as he glanced through to the valley, a hundred feet or more below, he saw the remains of what might have been extensive farms, over which roamed what looked like a herd of wild bison.

The panorama was beautiful in the extreme, banana trees, cocoanut palms, and different varieties of tropical fruits growing in abundance on the hills and in the valleys.

"A perfect Garden of Paradise," he muttered, in delight, "but not a human being to be seen. It is evident that the island was once inhabited but has been abandoned. If I am forced to remain here I will not starve, I am sure. But I am wasting time. Let me explore this peculiar building, and then I will try to make myself as comfortable as circumstances will permit. Ah! There is a broken door. I'll go through."

The aperture was at one side of the corridor, and looked dark and forbidding enough.

When he got inside he found it was a passage through which a gassy heat seemed to be flowing.

Wondering at the cause of it he went ahead, and came to a huge door of iron, which he pushed open.

The next instant he found himself in a mighty cavern, extending back as far as the eyes could see, and at the extremity he beheld a mass of enormous flames flashing up from the floor, licking out from the sides, and darting down from the top.

The gaseous heat evidently came from that fire, but it was far away in the direction of the mountain. Glancing around he saw that he was in what looked like a crypt for the reception of the dead.

Rows upon rows of long stone coffins, standing on pedestals, were scattered around, and a pathway led through the center of them, going toward the fire from the door through which Rob had entered the strange place.

Curious to see what sort of remains were in the sarcophagi, the boy approached them, and found that the lids of most of them had been thrown off and lay shattered on the floor.

Glancing into the nearest one, he was suddenly given a violent shock of surprise that wrung a cry from his lips.

A fabulous fortune was exposed to his view.

The stone coffins were filled with a vast treasure.

Antique vases and statuary, plates, dinner services and bric-a-brac of gold and silver filled one of the coffins.

Another contained thousands upon thousands of gold and silver coins of every civilized nation of the world.

Still another held boxes of diamonds, pearls, rubies, sapphires, garnets, and, in fact, every known precious stone.

One more held a mass of jewelry, studded with precious stones, and riven in the purest Spanish gold, while the fifth was filled with a fine dust of the same priceless metal, which must have come from the gold coast of Africa.

Indeed, so vast, so stupendous was the treasure spread out before the dumb-stricken boy, he could hardly conceive it.

Millions upon millions were stored in that huge chamber, but of what avail were the riches to him then?

He could not carry it away, and on the island it was perfectly valueless to him; yet the shock of seeing such enormous treasure heaped there fairly took his breath away.

Rob was astounded, and could hardly account for it, save in the belief that he must be on a pirate's island, and that a million souls had gone to eternity in order to amass that amazing fortune.

Then the boy remembered the inscription he had seen over the doorway of the palace, and he involuntarily cried:

"Yes, yes! Now I understand it. The name was that of Michael de Busco—one of the worst pirates who ever scourged the high seas; and the skeletons I saw must be those of his band, for the weapons they carried attest them to have been warlike men. This must be a part of his treasure. As far as I can see, only one half of these coffins are filled, and a few remnants in others show me that the empty ones must at one time have contained an equal amount of treasure, but it was removed.

"How came those skeletons to be there in that position? It is evident they must have died while feasting. In that case, their death must have been sudden. Yet who built this city—this palace—made those farms, brought those birds and beasts here? The pirates would not have done it with their own hands. They must have had servants or slaves. Yet where are they? I see no vestige of a single soul but those men at the table. The small houses of the village have humble interior arrangements—much as if their occupants had been an inferior people, of frugal habits, while here everything is lavish in extreme, and the wealth is beyond computation. The houses must have been tenanted by the slaves of the masters who dwelt in this palace, in all the royal grandeur of kings. Aha! What is that!"

In the middle of the pathway in which he stood, he saw a square block of stone suddenly rise, leaving an opening in the floor about three feet square, in which there burned a dull glow as if there were fire beneath it.

Startled beyond measure, the boy watched it and saw the light suddenly burst from the aperture, when a weird sight was suddenly presented to his view.

Before him stood a little old woman with a flaming torch clasped in her skinny hand, and a startled look upon her face.

She had emerged from the hole in the floor.

But such a looking woman!

Hardly four feet high, her body bent nearly double, and covered with a rude dress of goat skin of gray, with the hair outside; her skin was almost jet black, and her long hair as white as snow fell in disheveled masses around her head, and swept the ground at her unshod feet.

Her eyebrows, too, were white and met over the bridge of a hooked nose, that actually met her sharp chin, on account of the absence of any teeth in her sunken mouth.

She had a pair of lurid black eyes, deeply sunken in her head, and the skin was so shriveled up on her ugly face as to lend her the appearance of a most hideous, living mummy. She eyed the boy with as much astonishment as he viewed her, and an impressive silence ensued, during which they were both wondering at each other's presence there.

Thinking she must be an aged savage, Rob thought it would be useless to speak to her, considering she would not understand him, as it was not likely she could speak English.

But she saved him the trouble, and amazed him more, by saying in a shrill, treble voice, almost inhuman in its inflections:

"Who are you? How came you here?"

"Ha! You speak English!" he cried, with a violent start.

"Yes. I learned to speak your language. But answer me!"

"I am a solitary castaway, from the wrecked Hercules. And you?"

"I am the sole inhabitant of this island. It amazes me that you are here, as we are out of the course of most every ship."

"Then I'll tell you how I got here," said Rob.

And thereupon he told how the Hercules was burnt and wrecked.

She listened attentively until he finished, her lurid eyes sparkling, and at his solicitation, told her own story.

Yet she did so reluctantly, all the while watching him suspiciously, as if she distrusted him mightily, and meant not to lose sight of him.

"This island," said she, "is volcanic. Michael de Busco discovered it, and resolved to make it his home, wherein to store the treasure he amassed in his plundering cruises. He resolved to build a city, and make the island the most beautiful in the world. For that purpose, he brought here five hundred slaves from Madagascar, of whom Radama, from the City of the Thousand Towns, was my father. He was Michael de Busco's cook, and I, a babe at the time. My name is Ranavala. They commenced to build the city, which you may have seen, and the pirates were cruel task masters. The suffering slaves conspired to escape them, and steal their treasure.

"They had brought birds and beasts, and toiled to make a Paradise of this island, only to be crushed by the merciless men. My father, at the arranged time, poisoned their wine as they caroused ere going on a voyage, and you may have seen their remains at the board. The Hovas—my people—then took as much of the treasure from here as the ships would hold, embarked, and sailed off. I had strayed

away at the time, and was forgotten. Hence I remained here."

"This, then, is the remnant of the treasure?" asked Rob.

"It is. I have been here nearly one hundred years. In that time a sailor was wrecked here like you. He lived many years, and from him I learned your language. Then he died. He is the only human being who ever came here besides yourself."

She looked a hundred years old, Rob thought, and he took a step nearer to her; but she suddenly gave him a push and sent him falling down into the hole through which she had emerged.

The next instant the stone-trap was banged down, and Rob was a prisoner.

CHAPTER VI.

SURROUNDED BY PERIL.

Again the boy fell down a flight of stone stairs and received a severe bruising and bumping before he reached the bottom.

The old hag had taken him so unexpectedly he had been unable to save himself from falling.

"If I keep on," he muttered ruefully, "I will reach the center of the earth after awhile. The old wretch! She distrusted me and fears an invasion upon her domain. Probably she wants to see if I am accompanied by anybody. She may be under the impression a ship has landed some men, who have come to carry off that treasure and wants to see for herself."

He got up and glanced around, seeing that he was in a fair-sized apartment cut out of the solid bedrock.

The dull embers of a fire in a corner showed him indistinctly his surroundings, and observing a pot of iron suspended on a tripod over the fire, from which a savory odor emanated, he hastened over to it and seized a wooden spoon projecting from inside.

One glance showed him a stew made of vegetables and goat's meat, and with a sigh of intense relief he took the pot down from the tripod to cool off, and attacked the food.

He forgot all his woes in the prospect of a square meal, and scalded his mouth in his hungry avidity to fill his stomach.

There were some yams roasting in the live coals which he was not long in discovering, and a bunch of ripe bananas hanging on a ledge of the wall, and he had no hesitation in adding them to the stew, making a splendid meal upon the whole.

"She will be mad when she comes back," chuckled the boy when he had finally desisted. "I'm feeling like myself once more now, for I was nearly starved!"

Then he arose and finding an earthen jug filled with goat's milk he took a copious draught, increasing his self-satisfaction tenfold, for it was pure and cold.

Then he began to poke up the fire to get a little more light by which to gain a better view of his surroundings.

There was a heap of faggots near by, and having added

them to the fire a ruddy blaze shot up, the smoke going out of the face of the cliff through a small hole cut in the rock.

The glow of the fire showed him a square compartment, in one corner of which was a tremendous heap of dried leaves, upon which lay a dark object.

Near the fire lay a number of utensils used for cooking, and he found a small spring bubbling up in a corner and leaving the cavern by a small fissure in the floor.

"She evidently lies down in this place like a ground-mole," he mused. "But I'm glad I found her, vicious as she is, for the solitude of this island would kill a person if obliged to remain cooped up here for any length of time. I wonder if those Hovas ever got back to Madagascar with the pirate's ships and treasure?"

He caught sight of the stairs down which he had fallen, and making his way up to the trap he tried to open it.

The block of stone was securely fastened though.

Then he went down again, and seeing that the heap of leaves would afford him a bed, he determined to lie down until the old black hag came back to release him, and consider the prospect ahead.

Accordingly he approached the leaves, and throwing himself prone upon them, he was just about to close his eyes, when he felt something move beneath his body.

A cold chill shot through him as he felt that motion, and he suddenly sprang to his feet again, uttering a wild cry of alarm and darted away.

He was only just in time, for the next instant a huge head poked out, there came a mighty thrashing, and then a furious hiss.

And before the horrified boy's gaze there appeared a huge boa-constrictor, upon the body of which he had thrown himself.

Rob burst into a cold, clammy perspiration.

The black object he had seen was the coiled up body of this monster.

Its baleful eyes were fixed upon him with an angry light in them, and it began to rapidly dart toward him.

"Great heaven, I am doomed!" he gasped. "Did the black hag live here with this monster? She must be a witch."

Rob saw nothing with which he could defend himself, and bitterly regretted that he had not taken a sword from one of the skeletons up in the huge dining-room.

He felt that his doom was sealed, and wild with dismay at the horrible fate staring him in the face, he rushed up the stone stairs involuntarily, with no thought but to escape.

The huge serpent evidently knew he was a stranger there, and, seemingly bent upon his destruction, followed him.

Just as its mighty, sinuous body began to glide up the steps the trap was opened, and the boy sprang through.

He heard a cry of terror in the old woman's voice, and saw that she had rushed down in a hurry, for just then Shadrach, the lion, appeared in the doorway.

The beast seemed to be infuriated, its thunderous roars pealing forth through the crypt, its teeth gnashing, and a ferocious gleam in its small, fierce eyes.

Evidently the beast had seen the old woman and followed her down into the crypt.

Rob was in a most terrible position now.

To advance he must face the lion—to retreat was equally as disastrous, for the huge snake was coming up the stairs.

“Go down! Go down!” shrieked Ranavala frantically.

“No, I won’t—there is a snake down there!” gasped the boy.

Rob’s face had grown white, his eyes were starting, and a terrible trembling began to overcome him.

In the face of ordinary dangers, he was brave and intrepid enough; but in such a situation as this, he became thoroughly scared, and did not try to conceal it.

“Oh!” cried the hag, utterly aghast. “Has it escaped from its den? A rock held it in an adjoining cavern. It must have been displaced.”

Another terrible roar and snarl from the lion interrupted her.

“Is there no place to go?” panted Rob, excitedly.

“No, no! Oh, we are lost, lost, lost!” wailed Ranavala, in tones of dreadful despair, as she wrung her hands.

“Why did you leave me down there then?” reproachfully cried Rob.

“I feared you planned to kill me—to get the treasure——”

“Run!” shouted Rob just then. “The lion——”

Shadrach had bounded toward them, uttering a snarl.

“Save me!” howled the negress.

Under her white eyebrows her brilliant eyes were rolling with terror, and she quaked and shook so she could hardly stand.

“This way! Toward the fire!” shouted the boy, desperately. “It is our only chance. Lions dread it worse than anything.”

“No, no!” groaned Ranavala. “It is the slumbering heart of the volcano. The fire will kill—the gas overcome you!”

“It is our only chance. Come!” shouted Rob, frantically.

He seized her trembling hand and dragged her along.

She cried out to be released, but the lion had landed close to the hole in the floor, from which the boy had emerged, and was upon the point of springing after them, to end their lives.

Its tail was lashing the ground, its ears back, and its huge mane bristling, as it glared at the flying couple.

The hag was gasping for breath.

Overwhelmed by fright, it seemed as if she would sink.

Had she done so, her life would not be worth an instant’s purchase, for one bound more and Shadrach would be upon the flying pair.

At this moment Rob looked back over his shoulder.

He saw the huge serpent emanate from the hole in the floor, close beside the lion, and its frightful hiss, the darting in and out of its forked tongue, and the baring of its fangs, distracted the lion’s attention from them for an instant.

CHAPTER VII.

A BATTLE OF GIANTS.

The boa-constrictor having attracted the attention of the lion, Rob Selcraig and the hag, Ranavala, paused.

The fire in the distance was no longer looked to as their only haven of safety from the beast.

The serpent having emerged from the square aperture in the path among the stone sarcophagi filled with treasure, now darted toward the lion uttering a sibilant hiss of fury.

Shadrach had bounded forward, and was so close to the reptile it could not escape, although it turned tail as soon as its vicious eyes turned upon the monster serpent.

Before the lion could get away its enemy darted upon it, and in a twinkling the mighty coils were wound around the beast.

“A fight! A fight!” cried Rob excitedly. “Ranavala, they will kill each other. Just see what a terrible combat!”

“No!” gasped the black woman, her beady eyes burning luridly beneath her white eyebrows, “I will escape from here while I can.”

Then she hastened away.

Rob followed her.

She made a detour of the coffins and reached the iron door.

Running through to the corridor she fled up the stairs to the palace, leaving Rob to watch the contest.

The boy stood in the doorway, a curious look on his face.

A frightful din succeeded the constrictor’s attack upon the lion, the reptile’s hissing, and the thrashing of its body, added to the roaring and snarling of Shadrach, making the crypt shake and tremble as if from an earthquake.

Having succeeded in fastening its body about the beast, the serpent began to contract its coils until the bones of the lion fairly cracked beneath the pressure.

Vainly Shadrach clawed and snapped at its enemy.

The constrictor had gained the advantage, and its muscular body went on crushing the life out of the king of the jungle.

Their bodies rolled upon the floor in frightful contortions, and the din kept increasing, for the thunderous, hoarse tones of the lion now turned to earsplitting howls of agony.

Once it succeeded in fastening its fangs upon a section of its opponent, the jaws snapping shut, and a part of the serpent was severed, and went writhing and twisting away over the floor, while a spasmodic contraction of the rest of the body made the lion’s mouth open, its tongue loll out, and its gleaming eyes start from their sockets.

The next instant the constrictor buried its fangs in the lion’s mane, and its body began to unwind and recoil.

It had a deadly grip on Shadrach’s throat.

The lion could not shake it off, but it managed to catch the arched body of the reptile, and with one vicious bite the head was severed from the trunk!”

Instantly the body began to uncoil from the lion, and

the beast extricating itself from those deadly folds, sprang away, with the constrictor's head fastened to its throat.

The huge body squirmed, beat about, contorted into every conceivable shape, and finally disappeared amid the stone coffins, under which it rolled.

Shadrach did not go far.

Its massive legs trembled beneath its mangled body, its mighty head was thrown upward, and a wailing roar pealed from its lips; then it sank down upon its knees, as if doing so against its will.

The remnant of the serpent fell from about the beast, the lion, with a spasmodic renewal of strength, arose, and placing a huge paw upon its late enemy, with a last effort, it suddenly fell over—dead.

Rob uttered an intense sigh.

It had been a thrilling combat, and a scene which would never be banished from his mind as long as he lived.

Sure that both of the monsters were dead, and having no desire to remain underground any longer, he left the crypt and made his way up-stairs.

Seeing nothing of Ranavala, he went back to the huge chamber in which he had discovered the skeletons.

There he secured several of the best daggers and swords, and leaving the building, he proceeded toward the lake.

"I have no desire to take up my abode in that place," he muttered ruefully. "It is too horrifying—that hag fills me with disgust—the tremendous rooms with their rotten relics give me a chill. No—no. I'll find a suitable home in one of these small houses near the lake, and after I have fitted it up to suit myself, I will have nothing to do but secure all the food I require, until I can manage to get away from this island."

When he got among the houses of the dead city, he made a closer examination of them and saw that most all were built of the same kind of stone as that of the palace.

There was one solitary house, on the margin of the lake, and as soon as he entered it he found that it was just suited to his needs.

The building was square in form, had a stone-tiled roof, and was divided into four rooms by stone partition walls.

One of the rooms had a fire-place, and was furnished; but upon touching any of the woodwork, it crumbled away to dust.

There were rusty iron pots, stone jugs, bowls and bottles and a few household utensils standing on a stone shelf, all of which the boy knew he could use.

He thereupon set to work, and first cleaned the house out, by the aid of a faggot broom, which he hastily made, and when he had his task completed he built a fire, returned to the cavern under the crypt, and getting some live coals from the hag's room, he soon had the fire blazing.

Then he prepared a bed of dried leaves, having found one of the rooms admirably suited for a sleeping apartment, as there was a window in it.

The water of the lake was fresh and cool, and he resolved to turn a stream of it into the house.

This was done after a good deal of labor, for he had nothing but a rude wooden shovel with which to work, and had been obliged to make the shovel with one of the daggers.

The afternoon was worn away, and the sun declining when he finished his task.

He now had very comfortable quarters, which would be vastly improved after he had furnished it with a table, chairs, and such other things he found to be necessary.

He then went down to the crypt, and with a dagger which he had sharpened, he skinned the dead lion and stretched its hide on the grass in front of his hut to dry.

His clothing had been almost torn from his body, and he meant to manufacture a few needful garments from the skin to save his body from being broiled in the hot sun that beat down with such fierce intensity during the day.

There were no signs of Ranavala anywhere, but he did not trouble himself about her.

Working assiduously for a week, Rob managed to make his little home begin to assume rude proportions of comfort with the different articles he made.

During certain intervals he would go out in quest of food, and having killed a kid, and found an abundance of luscious fruit, he suffered no inconvenience about living.

With but few rude implements to help himself he had a good deal of trouble in fashioning his table and chairs, but succeeded by persisting, using wooden pegs in lieu of nails, and making a few rude tools out of weapons he found.

There was a flight of stone stairs leading down to the water's edge of the lake in front of his house, and at the end of the week, as he stood in his doorway, he saw Ranavala appear there.

She started on catching sight of him, and her brilliant black eyes snapped viciously when she perceived what he had been doing.

The boy saw at a glance that she was not amiably disposed toward him, since the advent of the lion down in the crypt.

"Hello!" he exclaimed, laughing. "Are you alive yet, old girl? I thought you was dead, you had disappeared for so long."

"You, is it!" she cried, in her shrill voice. "I hoped you fell a victim to the brute you brought here with you."

"No; they are both dead. But how came that reptile here?"

"It was young when brought here by the wizard man of the Hova," she replied, "and was kept in a den adjoining my cavern. I found companionship in feeding the monster and seeing it grow to its enormous size. The rock covering the entrance to its cave must have become misplaced, when last I fed it. That is how it escaped, and so nearly proved to be the end of us."

"It is lucky you opened the trap when you did, else I might have perished down in your cavern," said Rob, soberly.

"And I am sorry I let you out!" snapped the stunted little hag. "You have brought bad luck here. I will not have anything to do with you. The sooner you leave here the better pleased I will be. There can be no truce between us in future."

"Ah! You declare animosity against me, do you?"

"Call it what you will. Alone I lived in peace and serenity."

"Very well; I'll look out for you in future," said Rob.

"I am going to live here, and you can keep guard over the pirates' treasure—down in that hole. I don't want your company."

The hag scowled at him, and, without uttering another word, she hurried away, her skinny hands clutching at her goat's skin dress, and her long white hair sweeping the ground around her.

Rob did not see anything more of her for several months after that, and spent his time adding to his little store of household goods, until his hut had every essential to his comfort, and had several suits of clothing made of skin.

He had manufactured a needle out of a piece of steel chipped from a rusty sword-blade, and using the tough fibers of a gulielma palm for thread, managed to sew his clothing as strongly as if he had better material to work with.

In this way he made himself a hat, several pairs of shoes, and an immense umbrella.

He also made a stock yard, adjoining his hut, in which he secured a number of goats and kids, and several fawns, which he managed to capture.

Then he made a canoe to navigate the lake, and was much of the time trapping birds, and fishing, down at a low bluff, on the sea shore, near where he had made his first landing.

Then he commenced to build the hull of a boat, fifty feet in length, in which he proposed coasting around the island.

The old weapons he found were ingeniously transformed into saws, chisels, punches and other minor tools, and with these he worked from morning till night, when not in pursuit of game to replenish his larder.

The winter months of June, July and August had passed, and the first spring month of September commenced.

On the second day of the month, Rob discovered Ranavala coming along the sea shore dragging a heap of rope after her.

He wondered where she had secured it, as but little float-sam or jetsam ever drifted to the island shores, and concealing himself until she had disappeared through the gate of the city wall, he followed her tracks in the sand on the seashore, to the southward toward a huge heap of coral reefs which he had not yet found time to explore.

The tide was out, and when he arrived opposite the reefs he saw that the trail led out toward the rocks.

Still following it, he turned an abrupt bend, and going in among the now bared rocks he suddenly came to a pause.

A cry of astonishment broke from the startled boy's lips.

And no wonder, for the sight presented to his view was one calculated to arouse his most intense amazement.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HAG'S REVENGE.

Tightly wedged in among the black, jagged reefs, Rob saw the almost broken-up wreck of a ship.

But one glance was sufficient to show him that it was the hulk of the ill-starred Hercules, and he was not slow to

surmise that the vessel had been driven upon the reefs after he had been washed overboard.

The decking was most all gone, and she had parted amidships as cleanly as if cloven with an ax.

With some difficulty he managed to clamber into the shell, and found it half-filled with broken timbers and sea water.

A flock of albatross arose and flew away at his approach, uttering strange cries at his invasion upon the wreck.

"There is not much left of her," muttered the boy, "but I can use her timbers and planks, nails, bolts, and, in fact, everything upon her to construct my new boat."

He seized a broken plank, and managed to knock a split board from the side, and the water rapidly drained out of her.

When the hulk had been freed of the water he began to search around in quest of anything he could find and make use of.

The very first thing he espied was Chip's set of tools, which the poor fellow had brought down in the hold to stop the leak.

He also found several firearms, but unfortunately there was not a vestige of powder or cartridges; so the rifles were of no avail.

There was a large quantity of rope and cordage on board, and a few spare sails, which he was eager to take.

Then he commenced to gather everything he could find, and stow it away on shore, out of reach of the tide.

Rob worked incessantly on the wreck for fully a month, after that, and succeeded in securing nearly every plank, nail, and piece of timber left of the Hercules.

Besides that, he found a great many articles of invaluable use to him, and then continued building his boat with the remnants of the wreck.

Ranavala had appeared upon the scene once, and laid claim to everything, by right of discovery, but the boy drove her off, not to be balked that way, and she departed, muttering vindictive threats against him.

Her spite took a serious turn later on, for she tried to set fire to his boat one night while he was asleep.

Happily, though, he discovered it in time to extinguish the flames ere they could do any damage, and meeting the old harrikan again, he threatened her with death if she tried to interfere with him.

This incensed her against him worse, and served to culminate a feud of bitter enmity between them for the future.

But it frightened her off, and she vanished, leaving him unmolested for another long period.

Nearly a year had thus passed by, when Rob finally completed his vessel, and launched it in a high tide.

The hull was exceedingly well built, and was covered with several coats of paint, which he had found on the wreck.

He had secured enough oakum to calk his boat, and more than enough iron work for his needs.

Then over the hull he had put a coat of gummy substance, which he found in a butter tree, and a sloop rig was added, for which the spare ropes and sails he found did very well.

When the water soaked the seams shut, he found his new boat comparatively seaworthy, as she had been ably built.

Ballast of rock was next put in, and then he commenced to add the cabin and deck work.

When this was finally completed, he found himself the proud possessor of a very handsome boat.

Had he been in possession of a chart or map, or any nautical instruments to divine his locality, he would not have hesitated to set sail at once for Ascension Island, which he imagined could not be very far away.

Deprived of a guide to follow, though, and having no compass, he did not dare to venture on a voyage.

The truth was, although Rob did not know it, the wreck had been blown far south of Ascension Island and laid in the center of a circle of strong ocean tides, composed of the north of the circle of the Agulhas, and on the south of the southern connecting currents.

In other words the island had laid in the tropics of Capricorn, at a south latitude of 20 degs. 5 min., and a longitude of 18 degs. 30 min., far south of the southeast trade winds, utilized by ships crossing from southern points of Africa, and north of those coming from any point of South America.

The reason ships rarely ever go that way is on account of the doldrums (calms), but the monsoon storm which had overwhelmed the *Hercules* had occurred at a more northern latitude, the severity being increased by its raging against those trade winds, the north sweeping currents, and going into a different zone.

Having gotten everything in readiness and laid in a store of provisions, Rob embarked in the *Hercules*, as he called his boat after the wrecked ship, hoisted his sails and started for a breach in the reefs, on the outside of which he purposed sailing.

It was a warm day, with a blue sky overhead, flecked with light, fleecy clouds, but a soft, gentle breeze blowing N. W.

It was dangerous navigating thereabouts, as many sunken rocks bestrewed his course, but by careful management and giving the shore plenty of leeway he got out in deep water.

Taking a southern course, he headed for a small adjacent island, which he had often viewed from an eminence of the mountain, where he had arranged a lookout station.

The island was hardly an acre in extent, and was nothing but a mound of black rocks rising from the sea.

It laid about ten miles south of the island he lived on.

He had often seen a misty vapor rising from it that aroused his curiosity, and now meant to see what it was.

The sloop worked magnificently, as he was a good sailor, and made remarkably rapid headway, as she was narrow, deep, and very able, despite the vast amount of ballast he put in her stanch hold on the ribs.

Within an hour he arrived close under the lee of the island, and was about to look for an anchorage when suddenly he saw something that changed his resolve, causing him to tack and instantly flee in great alarm.

The mist he saw was smoke, and it was accompanied by lurid flames which he had not before seen on account of an

elevation which hid the north side of the island from his view when he was up at his lookout.

"It is a volcano!" he gasped. "Great Heaven! If once it should burst out into a state of eruption my own island may become destroyed, or the mountain on it may fall into activity. This is a bad outlook!"

He proceeded back to the other island, and completed a circuit of it, going inside of the reefs again the way he had emerged, and made up his mind to keep the little volcanic island under his observation in future.

We have before mentioned Rob having seen herds of wild animals roaming on the island, which looked very much like bison, and when he ever approached them, they invariably fled, in the greatest alarm.

A year of his enforced solitude upon the island was completed, and on the anniversary of that day he made up his mind to have a grand hunt, making game of the aforementioned beasts.

Had he been armed with a pistol or rifle, the hunt would have been comparatively easy.

But having no weapon upon which to depend save a long rapier, which he had sharpened on a stone until its edge was like a razor, and its point as fine as a needle, he resolved to bring down one of the animals with it by the sheer resort of stratagem to get near enough to them. This was no easy task, as they always fled when he approached, and were very fleet-footed beasts.

The herd invariably kept bunched, and roamed all over the island, browsing on its luxuriant herbage.

Besides his disadvantages, Rob did not know how ferocious they would be if he attacked them.

But he did not count the cost, and set out on that clear, cool day, armed with a rapier and a dagger.

He had seen nothing of Ranavala in over a month, but as he went down to the plain where he located the beasts, he saw the old woman upon a crag, watching him intently. She probably divined his intention, but said nothing.

The boy saw, though, that a demoniacal look was upon her black face, and her lurid eyes were blazing.

Turning his back upon her with rather an uncomfortable feeling at heart, and wondering what had occurred to her to cause her to give him such a look as that, he hurried off.

The afternoon sun was declining on the ocean and the wind was blowing freely from the southeast.

The pampas upon which the herd was browsing had been badly scorched by the sun, drying most of the long grass up until it resembled so much straw, at the roots of which the new growth was springing up.

"I'll have to get to the windward of them," thought the boy, "and arrange a heap of the grass to carry before me to shield my body from their sight in order to get near enough to fight one of them with my rapier."

To do this he made a wide detour among the cactus and stunted evergreens, going around to the westward.

He saw the animals evincing some uneasiness as he was going along, lifting their heads and staring around before they resumed their browsing.

Rob got in among a lot of oil palms, and having provided himself with a piece of rope, he cut a heap of the dried

grass, and making a sheave of it he continued on to the northwest and emerged into the plain again.

As he did so he glanced over toward the bluff upon which the castle stood embowered amid the trees.

A queer sight met his gaze.

Ranavala was descending to the plain with a flaming firebrand in her hand, which she kept burning by swinging it to and fro at every step she took.

Wondering what the hag was up to, Rob arranged his straw barrier, and began to approach the herd of animals with a slow, cautious movement.

There was a huge bull, drawn apart from the rest of the herd, nearest to him, and he singled the beast out as his prey.

"I don't know what success I'll have as a toreador," he muttered, "and am not afraid to tackle that beast; but if it is in human possibility to get him, his meat will make me some fine meals for the coming week."

So intent was the boy upon the animal he did not pay attention to anything else until he got close to the herd.

Then he noticed how restless they had suddenly become.

They began to bellow, and move about, as if alarmed.

Rob noticed a sudden darkening of the sky, and looked up.

A thrill of horror passed over him.

Ranavala had set the dried pampas grass on fire.

The southeast wind was rapidly spreading the flames and driving them toward him and the herd of animals.

A terrible danger stared him in the face.

The hag designed to roast him alive.

Thrilled with horror, seeing that his only escape lay in reaching the sea, three miles distant, before the fire did he threw down his sword and decoy, turned around, and ran for his life.

There came a loud bellowing behind him, the pounding of hundreds of cloven hoofs, and glancing over his shoulder, in terror, he saw the whole herd racing after him, crazed with fear.

It was unfortunate for him he looked back, for his foot tripped over a cactus bush, and he fell prone upon the ground.

The next minute the flying herd was all around him, and he was threatened with being trampled to death.

CHAPTER IX.

FOR LIFE OR DEATH.

Three miles from the sea, the pampas on fire behind him, and the wind driving the lurid flames toward him, as Rob Selcraig tripped and fell on the ground he gave up all hope of life.

The bison were all around him, bellowing with terror as they rushed away from the conflagration of burning grass, to which Ranavala had set her torch, over near the castle, just below the rocky bluff.

Threatened with being trampled to death even before the flames could reach him, Rob was in despair.

He yet retained his dagger, but the sword and his decoy lay upon the ground, near the cactus bushes.

The hag was venting her spite on him most fearfully, for she had seen him start off on his hunting trip, and designed no doubt to roast him alive.

One year on the island, and to die this way!

Oh! it was a maddening thought for the boy.

All the labor on his little home near the lake—all his work on the wreck and at building his boat—everything, in fact, seemed wasted now.

The huge bull which he had resolved to kill was rushing toward him, with its massive head close to the ground, and the boy saw that in another instant he might be crushed to death beneath its hoofs.

His heart seemed to jump into his throat.

The short horns were bent low, and he saw its wild eyes—felt its hot breath in his face; then the beast struck him with a stunning shock.

It tried to throw him out of its way with a savage toss of its tremendous head.

Rob felt the sharp horns pierce his goat-skin jacket under his arm, then he was thrown in the air.

The next instant he came down upon the bull's back.

The horns were still in his jacket, holding the animal's head in the air, and he felt that in another instant he would be thrown from his perch.

But he slid his dagger into the coat, and cutting the skin he liberated the bison's horns.

Down went the beast's head to a level with the ground again, and Rob clung to its tawny mane for dear life, while he pulled himself astraddle of the sharp, bony back.

The herd swept along like an avalanche, heading toward the sea, their mad bellowing and the pounding of their hoofs adding to the fast increasing roar of the onswEEPing flames of the pampas.

It was a dreadful ride.

Dense volumes of smoke were rushing up to the sky ahead of the flames, turning the daylight into a semi-gloom, and millions of flying sparks and cinders mingling with the clouds, added a weird effect.

Some of the animals fell, and the others crowding on behind, trampled over them and crushed them to death, or left them maimed to meet the worse fate of being swallowed up by the sweeping fire.

Rob noticed that the animals were going toward the spot where the wreck of the Hercules had been wedged in among the out-lying reefs, off the shore.

He had the utmost difficulty in retaining his seat upon the back of the animal he bestrode, as it was bumping up and down and swaying from side to side in the most erratic manner.

But he hung on with all his strength, and felt very thankful for the fortunate accident which had thrown him there, as he not only might previously have been killed, but even had he escaped the animals' hoofs, he could not have run for the seashore as fast as he was now going.

"If I escape from this fire alive," he muttered, as the perspiration streamed down his face, "I will fix that spiteful old hag, so that she will not do me any further injury."

The shore was yet a mile ahead, and the flames that rose

to the sky were now lapping the clouds two hundred feet above his head, fairly overhanging him like a pall of fire, and even rushing on ahead of him.

The heat was becoming intolerable, and the fiery sparks burnt his flesh as they dropped down on him.

But they burnt the beast he bestrode too, and goaded it on to the very limit of its speed, drawing forth bellows and moans of pain from its saliva-flecked jaws.

One by one the other animals succumbed and fell, until but two besides the bull raced on.

Upon looking back once, Rob saw one of the animals turn around, half maddened, and half blinded, glare at the oncoming fire, with bursting eyeballs, and then, uttering a fierce cry, it charged back at the flames, with down bent head, rushed into the fire, and perished.

The boy watched the sea with a yearning look of anxiety, wondering whether they would get there in time.

A few minutes elapsed, and they reached the shore.

The flames were all around him now, and he almost fell from the animal's back as the hot air filled his lungs; but gasping and choking, he held on.

The bison rushed out into the shallow water, leaving its two companions to drop dead in their tracks.

The deeper water was reached, and it swam.

Rob saw the rocks of the reef close by, and flung himself from the bison's back into the waves.

A thrill passed over him, as the cool water penetrated his scorching clothing, and with an intense sense of relief, he got under the port of a high rock, that protected him from the heat coming from shore.

The tide was running out.

This was a fortunate circumstance, as it left a rocky ledge bared, and enabled the boy to secure a place upon which he could rest himself.

"The fire must exhaust itself, now that it has reached the shore!" he gasped, as he drew himself up on the rock, "for it cannot go any further. If it had swept any more to the northward, my boat would have been consumed."

He remained sheltered behind the high reef for fully two hours, the bison having vanished from his view.

In the interim the roar of the flames had subsided, and the charred embers, carried through the air, had ceased to fall around Rob into the water.

The rock had completely sheltered him from the fire.

It was the most providential escape from death he ever experienced in his lifetime.

Waiting until the tide was at the turn, he got down from his perch, and made his way toward the shore.

A vast panorama of devastated plain, black, smoky, and covered with smoldering cinders, was opened before him.

The conflagration had swept over a large area, and he saw the charred remains of most all the herd of bison lying here and there, where they had fallen.

The ground was so hot he dared not step on it, but was forced to wade in the water along shore.

He was parched with thirst, and blistered by the heat.

"Such an experience!" he muttered, grimly. "I do not want any more of it. And now I must get back to my hut and have a drink, or I'll perish!"

He hastened through the water, as rapidly as he could, until he passed the burned tract.

Then he took to the sandy shore, and when he came in sight of the decayed city walls, he went inland.

His boat rode safely at anchor where he had left it, and when he passed through the city gate, he proceeded to his hut and found everything intact.

Having first satisfied his thirst, Rob next went out to his stockyard, and saw that his goats and sheep were not disturbed; in fact Ranavala had not been near the hut.

He fed the beasts, watered the plants in his little farm, and then he made his way over to the castle to look for Ranavala, to punish the old harridan for having tried to burn him to death in the pampas.

As he entered the broad hall, he saw her suddenly emerge from the banquet room containing the skeletons of Michael de Busco's crew of pirates.

She held a paroquet in her hand, and as soon as the bird caught sight of Rob, it set up a terrific scream.

The little old dwarf's elfin figure was bent nearly double, her long, white hair half hiding her jet black face, and her snaky eyes glittering like live coals of fire beneath her white, beetling eyebrows as she stared at Rob.

Upon sight of the boy, she gave a violent start, uttered an ejaculation of intense amazement, and recoiled a step.

"Ha! so there you are, eh?" cried the angry boy, as his blue eyes snapped, and a furious look overspread his face.

"He has escaped!" growled Ranavala, in amazed tones.

"Yes, thank Heaven!" replied Rob; "and I have come here to wreak a just vengeance upon you for trying to send me to a horrible death, you infernal old hag!"

"Bah! A fig for your threats!" she cried derisively, as she shook her skinny fist at him. "You cannot injure me, you devil's spawn! I am sorry I failed to roast you, but there remain other means to rid myself and my island of your hated presence. Leave me now, else you meet your doom at my hands at once."

She fairly screamed these vindictive words.

Rob could not refrain from shuddering at the diabolical expression of her black face and the fierce inflections of her tones as she threw the bird aside and stood glaring at him. But he was determined to carry his point.

"I am going to make a prisoner of you," said he, firmly, "and I will keep you shut up in your cavern so that you can do me no more injury in future."

"Oh! are you?" was the sarcastic reply.

She accompanied her remarks with a blood-curdling laugh.

Rob sprang toward her, but she turned around like a flash and darted to the end of the hall to where the window was that overlooked the plain far, far below.

She moved with marvelous rapidity for a woman who claimed to be a century old, and, before Rob could catch her, she jumped up in the window, passed through, and vanished from sight on the other side.

At first he imagined she had fallen down the face of the cliff and was dashed to death on the plain.

But, as he sprang upon the window, he saw that he was mistaken, for she stood a few feet below on a narrow ledge.

The boy was resolved to capture her, and seeing she could

not go along the ledge and gain the level ground beside the palace, he at once let himself down upon the precarious footing, and went after her along the verge of the yawning abyss.

She was as sure-footed as a mountain goat, but it made Rob dizzy as he glanced down the frightful depth beside him.

On she went until they were a dozen yards from the window. Then she suddenly turned around and began to approach him.

The foot-path was only a little more than a foot wide.

There was a perfectly fiendish glare in her baleful eyes, and a cold perspiration burst out all over the boy as he suddenly realized that she meant to attack him.

Only one result could come of a struggle; either one of them, or both of them, must be precipitated down the face of the cliff.

CHAPTER X.

ON THE LEDGE.

It looked just then as if a sudden period was to be put to the career of the boy Robinson Crusoe.

Ranavala's black eyes seemed to spit fire at him.

There was no doubt in Rob's mind that she meant to do him some kind of vindictive mischief, else she would not have returned so suddenly and come directly toward him on the narrow ledge.

The sun was declining in the west, sending a glow of golden glory over the burnt plain and the limpid sea, its rays slanting upon the rugged cliff and falling upon the jagged rocks, so far beneath the boy, upon which he feared he would perish.

He did not dare to turn around as she had done, for it meant a certain fall if he did.

Indeed, he had as much as he could do to hold himself in his present position, to prevent himself falling, as a strong wind was blowing, and the slightest force would suffice to dislodge him.

He dared not look down either.

If he did it made him get so dizzy that he almost lost his balance.

The cunning hag saw his dilemma, and knew that she had him at her mercy, for she was accustomed to climbing the rocks with impunity, while he was not, nor was he used to the position in which he found himself, whereas she had been there before.

He fixed a searching glance upon her, and she returned it with interest, as she saw him pause.

He did not know exactly what to expect, and looked like a person expecting a fatal blow coming from some unknown direction against which there was no guard.

The ugly little hag gave utterance to a wild, unearthly laugh, her hideous face becoming contorted to a most demoniacal expression at the same time.

"I told you that you would meet your doom if you molested me!" she mumbled, as the saliva ran from her mouth, and she clutched at a projecting rock. "And you

would keep on. But now you will dearly regret it. Ah, most dearly regret it. Your doom is sealed at last."

"What do you mean?" gasped Rob, bracing himself up.

"What do I mean? What do I mean?" she shrieked.

"Ho, ho, ho! Don't you see? You must be blind! I am going to throw you off these rocks! That's what I mean!"

"If I fall you will go down with me!"

"Maybe I will. Maybe I will. Your life is worth mine! We cannot both live on this island any longer!"

"You must be mad!"

"Ay! with rage at you!"

"If I remain here," thought Rob, "I'll perish!"

No sooner was he convinced of Ranavala's intention when he drew his dagger from his belt.

"Ha! you want to stab me, eh?" she shrieked upon seeing this.

"If you come within arm's length of me I will plunge it into your vile heart!" exclaimed the boy.

At the same time he commenced to slowly, carefully, but surely retreat backward step by step.

He balanced himself by clutching at the rough masonry of the huge building with his disengaged left hand.

Ranavala saw that he meant to get back to the window if he could, and her rage intensified.

"You can't get away from me that way!" she howled, in a violent paroxysm. "You escaped me once, but you shall not do so again. I owe you a grudge, and I shall get the best of you yet!"

Rob watched her narrowly, and kept retreating.

She followed after him at a safe distance.

But she had not gone far when he saw her stoop down and pick up a jagged piece of stone.

"I wonder what she is up to now?" he thought.

The hag did not keep him speculating long.

Suddenly pausing, she drew back her left arm, and fired the stone at him, with accurate precision.

It struck him on the forehead, and he uttered a cry.

Then he tottered a moment, as if about to fall.

The hag uttered a gleeful laugh, as she saw how effectively she flung the stone, and paused, expecting to see the boy lose his equilibrium, and fall from the ledge.

She was disappointed in her calculation, however.

Rob recovered from the shock by an effort.

Flattening himself against the building, he exerted all the force of his will to save himself from insensibility.

A dull throbbing pervaded him, thrilling every nerve.

It seemed, for an instant, as if he must succumb, but when he remembered what a terrible chasm was at his feet, and that he would surely be precipitated to the bottom, if he lost his senses, he overcame that faint, dizzy feeling.

"You incarnate murderess!" he cried furiously.

"Rave!" screamed the little wretch hotly. "Rave on. I did not do what I wanted to then, but I will try again."

She picked up another stone.

"It's all up with me, if I get another crack on the head," thought Rob, despairingly. "What shall I do?"

He could think of nothing to save himself, so he continued on, retreating backwards, Ranavala following.

She was awaiting her chance to get a good shot at him, and he saw what she was up to.

Already Rob was half way back to the window, and his heart bounded with joy as he noticed that the vindictive dwarf could not yet get the chance she craved.

"A few steps more!" he muttered, "and I will be safe."

Hardly had this thought flashed over his mind, when he saw Ranavala draw back her arm.

The hag had caught hold of a rock with one hand to steady herself, and flung the stone at his head.

He dodged it, his foot slipped, the earth beneath him crumbled and he felt himself falling.

A sickening sensation passed over the boy.

Every event in his life flashed before his mind.

Down went one leg over the edge, his other knee bent and his hands thrown up in the air.

He uttered a cry of horror.

It was echoed by a sibilant laugh from the old woman.

"Lost! Lost! Lost!" she howled with impish joy.

Rob grasped the rocks and saved himself.

Had he been an instant later he would have slid down all the way, and there would have been no salvation for him.

As it was he hung to the edge of the ledge with both hands, and all of his body was suspended over the edge of the ledge.

Drawing himself up again he strove to gain a foothold once more, but there was hardly room enough to do so, and he fell back again part of the way, with only one knee on the ledge.

"Let go!" shrieked Ranavala, as she sinuously drew herself nearer to him. "Go! Go! You cannot hold there! You must fall!"

"Oh!" groaned Rob. "This is terrible!"

His body was oscillating, and he felt that at any instant his despairing clutch on the ledge must relax.

He snapped his teeth shut as he saw his malignant enemy draw near and drew himself up again.

This time he succeeded in getting his body upon the ledge, lying upon one side with his feet toward the black dwarf, and both hands employed at holding himself where he was.

"I shall not go over!" he muttered fiercely.

"You must!" cried the old woman, who overheard him, "there is no salvation for you!"

"Heaven help me!" gasped the boy.

He could not move now one way or the other, for if he attempted to arise to an upright position he felt sure that he would roll off the ledge.

The hag got close up to him just then.

He felt her grasp upon his ankles, and knew that she was shoving him from his perch.

A shudder of horror pervaded him.

It seemed as if all hope must now be abandoned.

His feet slid over the next moment, and as they went down his body was thrown up with his back against the masonry of the building, leaving him in a sitting posture facing the plains.

He felt that he was secure enough that way for an instant, and reaching out he made a snatch at the inhuman woman to seize her.

She was too quick for him, however, for she glided back out of his reach with extreme agility.

Rob settled himself and was wondering what he should do to get upon his feet, when he saw some vines growing close to the window against the palace.

If he could only get hold of them he would be able to rise.

There was only one way to reach them.

That was to hitch himself along toward the window with his hands in the same position he was in.

He commenced to do so, having dropped his knife when he had slipped and Ranavala, seeing his intention, gathered as many stones as she could lay her hands on and began pelting him with them.

Nearly every one struck the boy, but he ignored the intense pain and continued silently but determinedly on.

Seeing how futile her efforts to dislodge him were Ranavala's rage kept increasing, her lurid eyes fairly bulging, her mouth frothing, and her cheeks puffing up until she resembled an infuriated adder.

Discontinuing the stone throwing, she suddenly began to move toward the boy, rapidly overtaking him.

It was astonishing to see how she trod the narrow ledge, for no bird, fly, or insect could have betrayed less fear.

Just as she reached Rob's side his hand closed upon the vine he had been trying to reach.

Ranavala seized him by the shoulder and gave him a push to knock him down again.

"You shan't get away!" she screeched furiously. "This time you must go. Over with you! Over, now!"

"Let go of me!" exclaimed Rob.

"Never, till you perish!"

"Then you shall go too!"

"Ha! There—you fall!"

"And you!"

She had dislodged him again.

Over rolled his body, but he hung on to the vine with one hand and grasped the hag with the other.

She tore herself free, stepped back, and picked up another stone from the foot-path.

Rob thought she meant to fling it at him.

This was not her intention, though.

She crept up close to him again, and as she saw both his hands hanging to the vine, she began to beat upon them with the stone, to make him release his hold.

Rob was filled with horror at the villainous persistence of his persecutor, and every blow she dealt him cut his flesh, and pained him so that he knew he would have to let go if she kept it up, and fall anyway.

CHAPTER XI.

SICKNESS.

Robinson Crusoe, Jr., was in a very dangerous predicament, hanging to the vines by both hands beside the window of the pirate's palace, Ranavala pounding his knuckles to make him let go, and the yawning cliff beneath him.

The dwarfed black hag had secured a solid footing upon the narrow ledge, hardly more than eighteen inches being the width of it, and one of her bony hands grasped the casing of the window through which Rob had followed her, by which she managed to steady herself.

The spiteful old creature seemed fully bent upon Rob's destruction, for she evidently had been disappointed at the fire of the pampas not accomplishing the work she designed.

"Let go!" she hissed. "Let go, I tell you! Do you hear? I will pound your hands into a jelly if you don't!"

And she continued to beat upon the boy's hands in a most savage manner, cutting and bruising him dreadfully, such was the strength she employed.

"I'll stop that in a moment!" gasped Rob.

And with that he grasped her by her dirty goat skin dress and nearly dragged her off the cliff.

She uttered a hoarse cry, dropped the stone and grasping the window ledge, broke away from Rob and sprang upon it, fearful lest she would share the fate she designed for the boy.

"I'll make a prisoner of her yet!" muttered the boy, wrathfully.

The coast was clear now, and he hauled himself up by the vines and gained a footing on the ledge.

Ranavala made one more effort to hurl him off, but as the boy made a snatch at her, she drew back, and uttering a scream of rage, she jumped down into the hall and fled through the palace, howling and raving wildly.

Rob made haste to get in the window, and once he was inside of the hall he started in pursuit of her at a run, just as she rushed out the huge door.

Ranavala ran across a small park, and getting among the ruined houses of the village she dodged out of Rob's sight behind them.

"The cunning beldame!" muttered the angry boy. "She is scared now, and will try by every artifice to get away from me. Ah! There she goes for the lake!"

He saw the hag flying past his own house, and then she went down the broad flight of stairs that led to the water's edge.

Rob's canoe was moored there.

The next instant he saw her get in, cut the painter, seize the double-bladed paddle, and leave the shore.

The boy paused on the steps at a loss how to catch her now, for she could easily evade him no matter what he did in an effort to head her off.

"There is no use going any further!" he muttered, in disgusted tones. "She is heading for the other extremity of the lake, and once she gets in the shelter of the trees and bushes at the foot of the mountain she will be safe."

Seeing that the case was hopeless he resolved to give it up for that day and await another favorable chance to capture her, for she was a constant menace to his life.

Accordingly he watched her until she vanished from view behind a jutting strip of land, and then he returned to his little hut, and began to prepare his supper.

The boy lived well enough, having an abundance of meat and fruit in his house.

He took great pride in his little stockyard, and saw it grow in proportion to the time that passed.

The goats gave him milk, he gathered penguin eggs on the reefs, the birds he trapped made an agreeable change, and there were plenty of fish, turtles, and shell fish for the mere trouble of going after them.

Up at his lookout station the boy had built a shed, and having selected the tallest palm on the island he lopped it down and managed to get it up at the bluff by the aid of rollers, a block and tackle.

Having manufactured a rough flag out of a piece of unavailable canvas, he had raised the palm, after nailing his flag on it, and thus had a signal flying all the time, that could be seen by any vessel within ten miles or more of the island, should any chance to pass that way.

He saw nothing of Ranavala for several months.

She did not return to her room under the palace.

Instead, she must have taken up her quarters in the mountain somewhere, as Rob had come across her footprints in the soil in several places.

After a lapse of four months, namely, in the month of October, sixteen months after the boy first landed on the island, she began to make her presence disagreeably felt.

It was in the spring temperature, the winter months of June, July and August having passed by uneventfully.

The first admonition the boy had that the vindictive old harridan had commenced to pester him was his return home from a fishing excursion, only to find that his little farm had been utterly destroyed, and all of his tamed goats and sheep had been ruthlessly slaughtered. It was a sad blow to the boy.

Ranavala's tracks told him who created the mischief.

He traced her footprints to the lake and saw that she had come that way.

No doubt she had been watching him going away, and seeing his fishing tackle, knew she had well timed her call to carry out her malicious plans.

Thinking it was of no use to try to find her, the boy set about to rebuild his broken fences and begin a new farm and stockyard.

While this work was in progress he one day chanced to go down to the seashore, when to his consternation he found that his sloop had been cut adrift the night before, and was at that moment drifting beyond the outlying reefs at the mercy of the wind and tide.

The boat was fully two miles from shore, and the boy began to fear that he would never recover it again.

He carefully measured the distance, and after debating the question in his mind he resolved to risk his life in a swim out to the castaway boat.

Accordingly he threw off his skin coat and pants, hat and shoes, and plunging into the glassy sea he struck out for the sloop with strong, easy strokes.

It was a much longer swim than he had ever before attempted, but he was a determined boy, and having a good stock of confidence in himself he thought he could do it.

Before he reached the boat he was taken with cramps.

For an instant he thought his doom was sealed.

Throwing himself upon his back he floated awhile until

the pain abated, then he went on and seized the bobstay just as he was taken with the cramps again.

Out of the water once more he came around all right, and getting up sail he brought the yacht back to an anchorage in the same spot he had originally had her.

Having mended the cut anchor rope he went ashore, donned his clothing and returned home, vowing vengeance against his hideous little old enemy.

Up to that time Rob's health had been the best, but the long swim and probably permitting a draught to strike him gave him first a cold, then a fever, and the next day he became hopelessly sick.

This was a most unfortunate circumstance, as he had not a bit of medicine of any kind, and had not the remotest idea what ailed him.

Then he went to bed and remained there two days.

He did not lose his senses, but was so sick he could not leave his rude couch in the little back room.

On the morning of the third day he was suddenly awakened by hearing an elfin chuckle in the window.

Glancing up, feebly, he saw the dark, evil face of the old woman peering in the window at him.

"Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho!" she croaked. "Sick, eh?"

"Good Heaven!" groaned Rob. "Have you come back to add to my misery, you old fiend you?"

"Yes!" chuckled the old woman, with a lurid glare in her black eyes. "I have come back. I have been watching you for a long time. Now I've got you at my mercy, and I'll settle this feud between us, once and for aye!"

"Surely you would not take advantage of my illness?"

"Oh, no! Wouldn't I, though! You've got the fever that comes in the spring from the marshes, on the south side of the mountain. Oh, it is a bad disease, and it killed many of the Hovas."

"Do you know what will cure me?"

"Of course I do! But do you think I'm going to tell you?"

"You might be charitable enough. You have already done me much injury," said Rob.

"Ay! And I'll do you more ere you die. I shall not lift a finger to hurt you—nor help you, either, for that matter. Oh, no! Ho, ho, ho! It is a pleasure to me to see you down at last, and no hope for you. Now I will have no dictation from you, and your skeleton will be all that will remain on that queer bed of yours! Then once more the little world in which I have dwelt so long in peace will be my own. Ho, ho, ho! My own once more."

She grinned and chuckled, and chewed on her toothless gums; then she stole away from the window, and going around the house, she cautiously skulked in the door.

Entering the bedroom, she sat down upon a bench Rob had made, and fixed her piercing glance upon him.

"You inhuman old fiend!" said the sick boy. "I wish I was strong and well once more; I'd fix you."

"Now would you?" sneered the old imp, with a grin. "But you are weak. I know how you feel. I've had it. You can't budge from that bed. Ho! ho! ho! You can't stir. It tickles me mightily. I can jeer at you now, and——"

"Shut up, and get out of here!" interrupted Rob.

"Oh, no, I won't. I want to gloat over your misery. It is a rare treat for me—a rich, rare treat."

Rob was pretty weak, but seeing that the old woman was perhaps the only one who could cure him, he suddenly made up his mind to force her to help him.

If something was not done soon he felt sure that he must die after all, and on that point he was not settled.

Despite his dizziness, faintness and weakness he suddenly nerved himself enough to bound from his bunk-like bed and spring toward Ranavala.

She started up, uttering a loud shriek of dismay.

Before she could get away, though, Rob was upon her with a savage ferocity that even surprised himself.

He had simply been spasmodically nerved up to this ordeal by the utter desperation of his plight.

Seizing Ranavala in his arms he pushed her over backward upon the floor, the old hag struggling with fierce strength to beat him off.

Each moment a low snarl broke from her thick lips, and her dark eyes fairly blazed fire in her fury.

The boy struggled hard to gain the supremacy over her, but she divined his intention, and strove to prevent him accomplishing his resolve.

Gaining a clutch upon his throat with her long, bony fingers, she began to squeeze his windpipe.

The boy was soon in a half strangled condition, and his fingers relaxed from their grip on her, and he fell over upon his back on the floor.

CHAPTER XII.

UNDER GROUND.

Well knowing that unless he mastered the old beldame, she would put an end to his own life, Rob did not permit her to hold him long.

Summoning up all his strength, he flung her aside, and, as luck would have it, she struck her head on the edge of his bunk and became senseless.

It did not take him long to find a piece of rope, with which he managed to tie her hands and ankles.

Rendered helpless, she could now do him no injury.

The boy was very much exhausted by the struggle, and crawled back into his bed, bathed in perspiration.

There he lay, watching Ranavala.

When she recovered her senses, after the lapse of ten minutes, she was very much surprised at her predicament, and lay glaring the most virulent hatred at Rob.

"You see," said the boy, with a laugh, "it is now my turn to gloat; and if you get away from me, it will only be by the strangest miracle."

"Oh, I will make you dearly repent of this when I do get free!" shrieked the enraged old woman.

"But you will never get free now," said Rob. "You will remain a prisoner, and I will die. Nobody can then liberate you, so you will lie beside my corpse and starve to death, unable to help yourself."

A look of intense horror overspread Ranavala's face.

"Oh!" she gasped. "Am I to die thus?"

"You have only one chance to escape," said Rob, grimly.

"And what is that?"

"You must cure me of this disease."

"Will you then let me go free?"

"No. I mean to keep you a prisoner constantly."

"Then I refuse to aid you."

"All right. You simply sign your own death warrant."

The hag started, for she knew he spoke truly.

"But how can I get you the needful herbs," she growled,

"if you keep me bound this way?"

"I will loosen your ankles and go out with you," said Rob, "and you can point out to me what kind to get."

Ranavala pondered a moment in silence.

Then she looked up and said:

"Very well. I don't want you to die, as I would have to die, too. Liberate me and I will do as you say."

Rob got up, tied a long rope around her waist and the other end around his arm, then freed her ankles.

She viewed this proceeding with a black scowl.

It made Rob laugh to watch her chagrined looks.

"You thought you could run away from me, didn't you?"

he said. "But I am one too many for you, old girl. You can't do it now, unless you drag me along with you."

The hag snarled some unintelligible reply.

Then she got up, shook herself like a dog just emerging from the water, and Rob heard her mutter:

"Come on. Follow me out."

He was hardly strong enough to go far, and told her so; but he put on his hat and followed her out into the sunshine, she leading him over near the water.

She showed him a number of herbs and leaves which he gathered, and then they returned to the house.

One of the herbs came from the root of a bush like one with which Rob had once poisoned his skin, and he wondered if the old woman had not a sinister design against him when she told him to get it.

With his suspicions aroused, he resolved to test her.

She told him to make a broth of the herbs, which, when drunk, would break the malarious fever.

His fire was rekindled, he put a pot of water on, and before the decoction was complete she directed him to throw in the herb of which he was suspicious.

"See here," said he before doing so, "I don't want any funny business from you. This herb is poisonous, and I know it. After this mess is cooked I am going to make you drink half of it. If you don't die, I will take the rest of it—do you see?"

Ranavala's face grew hideous with sudden agitation.

"Oh!" she exclaimed involuntarily. "You had best not put that herb in; not that it is poisonous."

"I will put it in, and make you first drink the beverage."

"No—no—no! I won't drink it—you shan't force me!"

"As I thought!" said Rob. "You designed to poison me. I see through your game. Now try this stuff without the poison herb. Will you test it?"

"Without that herb—yes. I'll drink it all."

Rob threw away the poison root.

Then he gave Ranavala some of the liquid to drink from

the iron pot, and as she did not hesitate to take it, he knew there was no danger to be apprehended.

Tying her ankles again, and leaving her lying on the floor, he finished cooking the herbs, strained off the liquid into an earthen jug, and threw the residuum away.

Then he partook of his newly discovered medicine as the curious old spit-fire directed.

It broke the fever in a few hours, and he fell into a sleep that lasted until the next day.

When he awoke, he was very much better, and Ranavala was fast asleep, and snoring on the floor.

He continued taking the bitter-tasting medicine, and kept steadily improving, the next day being able to get up and prepare some food for himself and the old Malagash, as there was, fortunately, an abundance of meat and fruit in the larder.

He kept the old woman a prisoner, and within a few days he recovered his health and strength again.

When the boy was able to get about once more, he removed the old woman to the hut nearest his own, and kept her locked up there, as she daily had grown more savage under restraint, and spent her time railing at and reviling him with all the blasphemy she had learned from the sailor, who before Rob had been a castaway on the island.

Freed of her disgusting presence, he spent his time at arranging some traps on the eastern side of the island, to catch some of the fawns he saw grazing there.

Within a week he had his stockyard finished and refilled with young animals.

One day he captured a huge antelope buck, and at once began to tame the beast, as he wanted to use it as one would a saddle horse.

The summer month of December had set in before he succeeded in his work, as the animal was hard to subdue and break in, but by persisting he finally managed it; and having made a saddle and bridle, he one day mounted the beast's back and rode all over the island.

During the struggle to subdue the beast he had a hard time of it, having been thrown down, gored at and trampled on. His final success filled him with pride.

He now had a splendid auxiliary, and having extensive use for such aid, he began training a pair of fawns to drag a rude little cart he managed to make, and carry such burdens as he wanted to take from one place to another.

The boy was most always employed at improving his surroundings, and made several trips in his sloop out to the fiery little island off the coast.

It kept burning without any perceptible change in its appearance; still he watched it with intense suspicion.

Ranavala a close prisoner, and every day growing more acrimonious, Rob went on with his work unmolested all through the summer, changing the little island into a veritable earthly paradise, such were the improvements he made.

How long his peace and tranquillity might have gone on it is hard to say, had not an accident happened.

Having brought Ranavala her food one afternoon, he forgot to carry away her knife; she secreted it, and when he went away she managed to sever her bonds with it and make her escape from the hut.

Rob saw her running toward the mountain, and dropped an armful of kindling wood which he had been gathering.

He had a knife in his belt and a rope slung across his shoulders as he ran out on the edge of the lake in pursuit of the old woman.

"She shall not escape from me," he muttered in decided tones. "I'll follow her until I catch her. She's going up the mountain now, and no doubt intends to get back to her old quarters again, where she was hidden before when she fled from me."

Ranavala went in among the trees.

She had glanced back, and saw the boy pursuing her, and apprehending recapture, with poignant dread, would doubtless exert herself to the utmost to evade the boy by every cunning artifice she was capable of.

Rob knew this, and did not fail to use every effort to keep her in view as he ran along.

There was not a very thick undergrowth beneath the trees, so he ran on with but little trouble.

Keeping a bright lookout ahead, he could plainly see her stunted figure dodging among the tree trunks and going over and around the rocks.

The further up the mountain they ascended the more rugged and difficult became the road to travel. Huge boulders were heaped up on every hand, while ever and anon he came to great rifts and holes, down which a sudden fall meant certain death.

There were numerous streams of water and many tangled vines, but these Ranavala avoided as well as Rob, as she fled along further and further toward the top of the volcanic mountain.

The boy saw her vanishing behind a huge heap of rocks, and when he got around where she had disappeared he could see no trace of her.

The ground was moist, though, and he saw her tracks leading over to a huge cluster of bushes into which one of the swift running streams poured over a lot of fallen tree trunks, which had come down on the current.

A smile of satisfaction crossed his sun-burnt face.

"I've tracked her to her lair!" he muttered.

Lifting the bushes he saw the stream pouring into a large circular hole at the base of the rock.

Ranavala had undoubtedly entered this aperture.

Rob stepped into the cold stream and went in.

He found the passage enlarging as he proceeded, and heard a thunderous roar coming from some distance ahead.

"This stream goes down a fall!" he muttered, "and must emerge from under the earth some distance further on."

The current momentarily grew so strong as to nearly lift him from his feet and obliged him to cling to the rugged sides to save himself, as he penetrated the dark place.

Presently he felt a shelving bank at one side.

He was just about to ascend it when he felt a crushing blow, much as if a billet of wood struck him.

Ranavala's hideous laugh rang out with an echo in the darkness, and he heard her footsteps scampering away.

Then he staggered and fell back in the stream.

He felt the current catch him and whirl his body along to where that deafening noise came from, and was utterly unable to prevent it. Then a sickening feeling came over

him as he realized that he was being carried to the brink of a waterfall in the darkness, the depth of which he knew nothing about.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN THE JAWS OF DEATH.

Rob Selcraig felt himself whirled along on the rapid stream, under ground, with amazing velocity.

Every instant the thunderous roaring noise drew nearer, and he knew that he was drawing close to the edge of a cataract of some kind in the darkness enshrouding the tunnel through which the stream poured.

The blow Ranavala had dealt him might have deprived the boy of his senses had he not fallen into the cold water immediately afterward.

That drenching alone was all that saved him from utter unconsciousness; still it partly stunned him.

He had pursued the fugitive hag to her former lair up in the mountain, it is true; yet it was a disastrous hunt, as his present predicament showed.

The old woman, after striking him, fled up the sloping embankment, and he could hear her elfin laugh pealing out with startling echoes through the cavern athwart which the current ran.

"If I could only see where I am being carried," groaned Rob in anguished tones, "it would lessen the horror of this predicament. But all is as dark as the grave, and in a few moments I will be dashed over that fall, and perhaps killed. Oh! why did I leave that knife in Ranavala's hut this afternoon, so that she could cut her bonds and escape?"

He had but little time for self-reproaches, for he was dragged along by the remorseless stream, and though he struck out with all his strength to reach one of the shores, he found that although he made a little headway, it was barely sufficient to help him much.

The stream was very deep, too, and with each succeeding moment his progress was hastened ten-fold.

A moment more and the frightful noise grew so deafening it drowned out every other sound.

Rob was swept along into a boiling, seething vortex, then there came a sudden shock, as his body struck against a protruding rock, and his progress was stopped.

Panting for breath, wildly thankful, and with the strength of despair, he clutched at the rock, and held himself up from the roaring, turbid water.

The rock was rugged, slimy and small; but it was a safeguard against his being carried over the fall, down into the unseen and unknown depth below.

There were eddying currents and thick foam all about him, and his body was swept out from the rock every moment, straining at his arms as if the cruel, merciless waters were bound to destroy him at all hazard.

"I must get up on top of the rock," he gasped, as a violent jerk of the fierce waters tore at his submerged body. "I am in an unsafe place here."

It was a hard matter, though, for every time he attempted to clamber up he slipped and fell back again.

It made him desperate.

After awhile he managed to get one of his legs across the rock; then he forced his body up from the water after it.

There was just room enough for a seat, leaving his legs dangling over in the flood, and by listening he could hear the water go tumbling down a sheer descent of several hundred feet below where he sat.

It made him shudder to think what a small reliance he had now, for the rock jutted out, just upon the edge of the fall, only a few inches separating him from destruction.

"How, in Heaven's name, I am to get off of here I do not know," he muttered despondently, as he gazed around, in a vain endeavor to pierce the circumambient darkness. "If I attempt to leave the rock, this terrible tide will carry me over the falls, as I am not capable of swimming against it by any means save with some one's help."

It was a very gloomy prospect.

Half an hour passed by, when suddenly, as he sat, gazing off to the right, he saw a tiny spark of light, then it flamed up brighter, and, after a few minutes, it swelled into a full glowing fire that roared up in the darkness.

As the fire grew in volume he saw Ranavala.

She stood like a witch beside the blazing heap of fagots, and was intently adding fuel to the flames, until they leaped a dozen feet in the air and cast a ruddy glow around.

"She will soon see me now," thought Rob, "and if she does, the accused old fiend will try to dislodge me from here as she did up on the cliff, behind the palace, nearly a year ago.

"In almost two years that I have been upon this island that incarnate old reprobate has been a bane to my existence."

He watched Ranavala in a savage mood.

She kept heaping fagots on the fire, until the blaze grew to enormous proportions, and the smoke curled up to the roof in huge, heavy clouds.

By the light Rob saw that she stood in a huge cavern on that side of the stream shaped like a half hollow, the roof high over head and the walls, away in back, being rough and covered with ferns and vines.

On the outer side of the stream was a dead wall that ran to the edge of the waterfall.

Then he glanced down the yawning abyss into which tons upon tons of water were falling in a yellowish stream, and breaking into spray and heavy masses ere it got half way down to the far-distant bottom.

He could just faintly discern a tremendous basin below, into which it fell thundering; then a scowling dark stream, that flowed off in the darkness beyond, capped with churned-up foam, and littered with debris.

The rock upon which he sat was the only one that cropped up out of the water on the edge of the fall, and the water surging all around him looked deep and treacherous.

The shores on either hand were fully twenty feet away, and the only one available was that upon which Ranavala stood.

He had no sooner taken in that much, when he saw the

old woman leave the fireside and walk down to the edge of the stream and glance around.

He could plainly see the lurid light in her beady black eyes, and the cold wind laden with mist that came up from the dark chaldron beneath Rob swept the old woman's long white hair out in a sinuous, trailing mass.

She had on a lamba, or dress, resembling a Roman toga, which is native with the Malagash, and in the ruddy glow of the lurid fire her dark-skinned body glistened as if it had been covered with some polishing substance. In her bony hands she clutched a club made of the branch of a tree, which was no doubt the very weapon with which she felled Rob in the first instance.

No sooner had she reached the edge of the water when her roving glance fell upon the boy, and she gave a violent start, and uttered a suppressed cry of amazement.

A smile curled the boy's lips as he saw this action, then he heard her scream, in tones of impotent rage:

"He is saved in the very jaws of eternity!"

"And no thanks to you!" he shouted, to make himself heard above the din of the tumbling water.

She rushed up and down the margin of the stream like an angry, impatient tigress in its cage of captivity, foaming and fuming, and wondering how she could get at him to wreak her spite upon him.

Every once in a while she would pause and glare at him.

Then she resumed her nervous walk up and down, and finally she squatted down upon a rock.

Rob was momentarily expecting a fusillade of rocks, as that seemed to be her forte when attacking him.

It did not come, though, as she was engaged at thinking of some other plan in regard to him.

Presently she arose and walked down to the water.

Rob watched her, and saw her proceed toward the entrance to the cavern, faintly to be discerned in the distance by the few radiations of light streaming in through the vines covering the rocky opening.

The boy saw her lift the vines aside, pass out, and then begin to tear the vines away from the opening.

When they were all gone he could see her, through the opening, go up the stream, with her club, to where the tree-trunks lay piled up, with the stream pouring over them.

"What is she up to now?" thought the boy.

He was not long kept speculating on that score.

The tree-trunks were wedged across the stream.

They evidently had floated down the mountainside, having fallen into the water at different points.

The old hag now meant to make them engines of Rob's destruction, for he saw her begin to pry them loose with her cudgel.

One of the logs was forced into the stream, and as the tide caught it and swung it around, the log began to shoot down the stream and darted into the cavern.

Each second it gathered headway, until it was racing along like a ball shot from a gun.

Then, like a flash, it occurred to Rob what Ranavala designed doing by liberating the wedged logs.

They would dart at the rock upon which he was perched, and either knock the rock over or sweep him off!

A cold sweat broke out all over the boy, as the truth

dawned upon his mind, and he saw the huge log come rushing toward him with the terrific tide.

He had no more than time to get his legs around to the other side of the rock, when the log struck it with a concussion that nearly threw him from his seat.

It came on broadside, and remained where it was.

The next instant, into the cavern shot another log, and it was followed by half a dozen more in quick succession.

Every log struck its predecessor with a crash, and Rob felt the rock to which he clung begin to totter.

"Good Heaven!" he groaned. "A few more such blows as that will utterly dislodge it, and I will go over the fall, buried in the tree-trunks."

Several of the logs remained jammed where they were, and several more went shooting over the fall, striking the bottom with a grinding crash that made the boy shudder.

His situation was momentarily becoming more terrible.

Noticing that some of the logs remained, he was in hopes that they might form a bridge upon which he could cross over to the cavern near the fire.

Indeed, he tried his best to float them in a line into that position, but others coming down upon the stream struck them with the force of cannon-balls, and caused him to desist to save himself from being knocked over.

He saw the hag glare in through the entrance at him once, to watch the effect of her experiment, then she resumed her labor, with looks expressive of the assurance that she would ultimately succeed in hurling him over the chasm.

Log after log now came rushing down upon him, and shock after shock followed in rapid succession.

Suddenly the boy felt the rock begin to roll under him.

He sprang to his feet upon it.

Another huge log came with appalling force.

There came a sudden upheaval of the water.

Then Rob sprang for his life.

The rock had rolled over the fall, and he had jumped upon one of the mass of logs, all of which were hurtling toward the edge of the fall.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE EARTHQUAKE.

The whole mass of logs began to rush toward the edge of the fall, carrying the boy along with them.

He ran along them as nimbly as a cat, making for the end that was nearest to the shore.

Another log shot down the stream, and hitting the others, they began to shoot the fall like huge arrows.

Rob gained the extreme end of one of the rolling logs, and just as it darted toward the abyss he sprang.

The shore was ten feet away, and the boy was within a yard of the edge of the fall when he struck the water.

He felt himself being carried over.

His jump brought him to within four feet of the shore, and the water being deep he struck out for the embankment.

Along he was carried, and his legs went over the fall.

A thrill of horror convulsed him.

He saw a dark mass ahead and clutched at it.

His hand touched a rugged rock on the shore.

For an instant it seemed as if the force of the tide would tear his hands from their convulsive grip on the rock, and the tumbling water splashed up into his face and poured over his shoulder.

But he hung on with all his might.

It was a terrible struggle, as he was contending against a heavy body of water and a most tremendous pressure.

"Heaven help me!" he gasped. "If I let go I am gone!"

By a most desperate effort he dragged himself nearer to the shore, and when his feet sunk they touched the steep bank at a depth of over a yard.

It relieved him of an immense strain, though.

Then he made another effort, and managed to get his body out of the water upon the shore.

He was utterly exhausted.

Throwing himself down upon the ground, he lay there like a log for fully five minutes.

When he recovered his faculties, and sat up again, the deathly pallor had fled from his cheeks, and he breathed easy once more.

Glancing over at the entrance, he saw Ranavala approaching, as if to enter and see the result of her work. Rob jumped to his feet, and although unnerved and trembling somewhat yet, he ran over into the shadow beside the wall, and crouched there, edging as near to the door as he could get, without attracting her attention.

A minute later Ranavala entered.

She paused, and glanced over at the fall.

Not seeing the boy, and observing that the rock upon which he sat had been knocked away, she naturally imagined that her wicked plan had succeeded.

"He is gone! He is gone!" she cried jubilantly, as she clapped her claw-like hands together. "What a success I have had! No more will he trouble me now. Ha! Ranavala owns the pirate island alone once more!"

Then she advanced a few steps into the cavern.

Coming to a pause, she was about to look off toward the fire, when Rob glided up behind her.

The boy made scarcely any noise, yet she heard him.

She uttered a loud cry, and sprang back.

Before she could get away, Rob seized and pushed her over.

She struggled like a wildcat, but was no match for the angry boy, for he sat on her, and drawing his knife, he rapidly cut a strip of skin from her dress.

With the thong he bound her wrists behind her back.

"I've given you another sore disappointment, haven't I?" laughed the boy. "Eh, old girl? Keep still, now!"

"Oh!" she screamed, her black eyes fairly bursting from her head, as she glared at him. "He has a charmed life! He is enchanted! Let me go! Let me go!"

She struggled, but in vain, to get away.

Having secured her, Rob arose to his feet.

"Get up!" he exclaimed. "I'm going to bring you back to your prison again. It don't pay to have you running about at liberty. Do you hear?"

Ranavala struggled to her feet.

"You will not hold me long!" she exclaimed.

"Won't I? We shall see!"

"I'll get away again some time, and then get rid of you!"

"Nonsense! Come along now!"

Passing out of the cavern, followed closely by the boy, she descended the mountain, and they proceeded back to the walled-in city, the hag muttering threats all the way.

Rob imprisoned her again.

Having assured himself that she could not get out of the hut, he went to his own abode, and tired out with his recent violent exertions he lay down and fell fast asleep.

The next day the boy went up to his lookout station, and glancing over the sea, as was his custom, he was startled by seeing a huge conflagration.

It came from the little island off the coast, which he had seen burning before.

The whole island now seemed to be ablaze.

"There must be a growing volcano over there," he mused, as he watched it, "and some day I may have a second Vesuvius burst out so close as to bury this island and myself in ashes."

Filled with apprehension, he went down to his little sloop, and made an examination of her to see that she was available for instant use, should the occasion arise in the future.

He had rock ballast under the cabin floor, and it did not lay very well.

As a consequence, when he got in a heavy swell and the boat pitched, the ballast shifted and bumped so hard on the bottom as to fill him with the fear that it might knock the planking out, or stave a hole and sink the Hercules.

"I must change the ballast," he thought, "and as I may have to suddenly fly from here and trust my fate to the ocean, why not prepare myself the right way beforehand? There is all that treasure in the crypt under the palace. I'll throw out these rocks and substitute gold for them. It will make better ballast, and if I at any time have to sail away, I will not go empty-handed."

Rob's conclusion was a wise one, as the sequel will show.

Accordingly, he got all the rocks out of his boat, and harnessing up his fawn to his rude little wagon, he drove over to the palace with one of the wicker-work baskets he had made from the switches of a willow, and descended to the crypt.

He began his work of emptying the stone sarcophagas filled with gold coin first, and drove the wagon load of gold down to the sea shore to a raft he made to carry it out to the vessel.

Within three days all his rock ballast was substituted by gold, and as many of the jewels as he could stow away with ease.

He had several water tanks on board, which he always kept filled, and invariably kept a supply of dried meat, like pemmican, in his locker.

He now took the precaution to lay in an extra supply, and added all sorts of food that would keep a length of time.

Meanwhile, he brought Ranavala her food twice a day,

and the old harridan kept heaping bitter reproaches upon him for making a prisoner of her.

He paid no attention to her complaints.

Thus the third year of his enforced exile upon the island passed by without any sign of a rescuing sail, or anything particular transpiring save the constant burning of the fiery little island off shore.

The rainy season set in, and Rob kept indoors most of the time, until at last there occurred an ominous event to disturb his tranquillity.

One night he was awakened by a terrific shock. He sprang out of bed and saw his little hut swaying as if about to fall down on him.

He rushed out, and the moment he reached the street he was hurled violently to the ground.

There came a booming sound and a sudden upheaval under his body that fairly sickened him, then he saw some of the huts falling in ruins.

"An earthquake!" he gasped as he got upon his feet again. "Good heavens, the island seems to be going to pieces! What shall I do?"

He glanced toward the sea.

There had been a hot, stifling feeling in the atmosphere, but it now began to rapidly cool off and a strong gale to blow off shore.

Rob stood near Ranavala's hut.

As he glanced at it another shock came.

It was worse than the first one, and it flung him prostrate again upon the ground.

He heard a crash of masonry all around him, and he saw Ranavala's prison tottering.

From within he heard the old woman's shrieks of terror, and her voice imploring aid to get out.

"She will get killed!" gasped the startled boy. "I must get her out of there before the walls of her house fall upon and bury her."

Getting up again, Rob rushed over to the old woman's prison and threw aside a log that secured the door.

The next instant Ranavala rushed out.

She was dreadfully frightened, her lurid eyes protruded from her head, and her dark skin had assumed a saffron color, while she trembled like a leaf.

"Save me!" she shrieked. "The world has come to an end!"

"It is an earthquake!" cried Rob.

"What shall we do?"

"The island may be destroyed," said the boy.

"Then let us embark in your boat."

"Ha! Just the thing! But it will be bad to put out to sea in this gale, I can tell you."

"Anything is better than this," she replied wildly.

"I suppose it is," thought the boy.

Ranavala set off at a run and Rob followed her.

She headed for the sea shore in the direction of the boat. Everything was dark, and the earth was rumbling and shaking beneath their flying feet.

When they reached the shore the tide was up, and they got on the raft to get out to the sloop.

There was a sail on it and a rudder, and as the wind

caught the canvas it sent the raft flying through the water at a terrific rate toward the sea.

They passed the sloop, unable to broach up, and fearful lest he would be carried out to sea, Rob told the old woman to jump overboard and swim for the boat.

She refused, and while he was wondering what to do she stole up behind him and gave him a shove.

He lost his balance, and reeling an instant, he fell into the stormy water, while the raft raced away and was swallowed up in the gloom beyond.

Rob sank beneath the waves just as another violent earthquake shock made the island tremble.

CHAPTER XV.

A SAIL AT LAST.

As Ranavala pushed Robinson Crusoe, Jr., into the dark sea, when the third earthquake shock convulsed the island, the raft was caught by the wind and was whirled out toward the reefs.

The boy sank beneath the dark waters.

For an instant it seemed as if his three years' career upon the island was to be brought to a climax.

But Rob was a strong swimmer.

When he came to the surface, he began to battle the waves for his life, the wind blowing off shore, driving him back as he strove to get over to his boat, which was anchored near where he fell in.

Seeing, finally, that he was wasting his strength in his efforts to breast the wind and tide, he knew that he could not reach the sloop.

Then he resolved to take a desperate chance.

"I'll let the gale drive me out to the reefs," he thought, as he laid over on his back and floated. "If I reach the rocks, I may be able to hold myself there until the wind abates. Should the island go to pieces, I'll perish anyway!"

He was carried along with amazing velocity.

Within five minutes he saw the dark outlines of the reefs ahead, and paddling over to the left hand side, he just avoided being swept through the breach in the rocks, between which he generally sailed out to the open sea beyond in his boat.

Before he could save himself he received a violent blow by striking a submerged rock, and with his senses leaving him, he struggled on and caught hold of a projection.

He never knew how he got up on the ledge before him, for he soon became insensible, and laid there like a corpse until the sun was high in the heavens the next day.

When his senses returned he was weak and dizzy, and could hardly move hand or foot.

It was a glorious day, and a glance at his island home showed him that it was intact.

But a strange change had come over the scene. From where he lay, on the high elevation, he had an uninterrupted view of the pampas where the fire had occurred, and

he saw a huge volume of smoke arising. A second glance showed him that the island was split completely in two by a huge rent in the earth, extending north and south.

From the gaping aperture the smoke was arising. Off to the south he saw that the little island of fire was now blazing furiously, and a thin, spiral column of smoke was arising from the mountain cone in the center of the island, filling him with dread.

"The crater of the volcano has been disturbed," he thought, "and it is liable to break into eruption at any moment, ruin the island, and kill me."

He watched it awhile, and his strength returning gradually, he managed to struggle to his feet.

He saw that the tide was very low, and the wind had gone down to a soft, gentle breeze.

The water between himself and the mainland was almost shallow enough to wade ashore, and he saw that his boat was all right.

The latter fact filled him with joy, as the Hercules was now his only reliance in case of an emergency.

The boy distrusted the appearance of his surroundings mightily, but nothing happened, so he got down from the rock, resolved to gain the deck of his boat.

As soon as he got in the water, he was surprised to find it unbearably hot, and losing no time, he finally reached his boat.

Distrusting the general appearance of his surroundings, Rob determined to remain on board the Hercules.

"If anything happens," thought he, "I'll slip the anchor, hoist my sails, and make tracks for the open sea."

Fortunately he kept his boat well stocked with water and provisions, so he had no need to go ashore.

He had a dull headache all day, but that did not prevent him drifting the boat out to the vicinage of the reefs, so that he could go at a moment's notice.

He shook out the sails, hoisted the main sheet, and having everything in readiness, he waited.

Nothing occurred to disturb him though.

Not to be deluded by appearances, he remained on board the sloop for two weeks, during which interval he did not secure much rest, on account of being obliged to watch for an eruption of the volcano.

The smoke finally ceased to curl up from the rift in the ground, but it emanated from the apex of the mountain in a thin, vapory steam.

Rob's fears began to diminish, and as his food and water had given out, he finally concluded that there would be no danger in going ashore to replenish his supply, so he sailed the boat in again.

Having provisioned his sloop, he walked over to the huge chasm stretching across the island.

There was no way for him to get over to the walled-in city, as to do so he would be obliged to cross the yawning abyss that now divided the island.

For almost its entire length, which the boy followed, the opening measured fully from twenty to one hundred feet across, and ran in an uneven serpentine line.

Coming back to its narrowest place, he glanced down, but could not see the bottom anywhere.

There were a few tall palms near by, and securing an ax

from his boat, he lopped down several of the trees, sending them across the chasm to make a foot-bridge.

Having felled four trees, laid them side by side, and pegged cross-pieces on to hold them together, he managed to manufacture a strong, serviceable bridge, upon which he could cross to the other side in comparative safety.

This done he went up to the city.

It was almost destroyed.

Nearly all the huts, all of the wall and the huge, beautiful palace of Michael De Busco, lay in ruins.

The earthquake shocks had leveled everything.

The only places of interest to him which had not suffered were the houses near the lake.

His own hut was nearly ruined, but its walls and roof stood yet, and he saw that he could repair the damage without much trouble.

"Had my hut been as tall as the others, it would have been razed to the ground!" he muttered. "And now to see my pets."

His stockyard was all right, the animals browsing as if nothing had happened to disturb them.

He fed the young ones, and returned to the house.

"Why," he muttered, "where is the water gone?"

He had turned a stream from the lake into the hut, but it was now gone, and he walked over to the steps, on the shore, and found the canoe high and dry.

The water of the lake was disappearing.

Around on the east side he found a split in the earth, and discovered that the lake was draining into it.

There was nothing else of interest to him, except to find that when the palace fell in ruins, it covered up its subterranean caverns and passages entirely.

The boy found no further cause for apprehension, so he set to work to repair his hut.

A period of two years passed uneventfully by, the boy working on the island as usual, improving it, and glad to be rid of the old Malagash woman.

It is true her company had been a relief to the monotony he endured, and he had some one with whom to converse; yet she was such a malicious old wretch, he had been in constant dread of her.

He often wondered what became of her, when on the night of the earthquake the raft had been blown out to sea; but as he had found no traces of her, he concluded that she must either have starved to death, or else had been swept from the raft in a storm.

Late one afternoon—it was on Rob's twenty-second birthday—he came home with his bow and arrows, and a short handled ax thrust in his belt.

He had been on a hunting expedition, and having slain a fine antelope, he was about to harness up his team of fawns—now grown to be large animals—to go after his game, when he received a start of surprise.

Happening to glance off toward the sea, he beheld a sail in the distance, gradually drawing nearer.

A thrill of ineffable joy passed over him.

"Thank God!" he cried in delight. "A sail! A sail!"

It was the first one he had seen in five long years, and he felt that his deliverance from the island had come at last, in answer to his hourly prayer.

Wild with delight, he hurried up to the rock plateau where he had his lookout station, and gathering a tremendous heap of dried leaves and twigs, he kindled a roaring big fire as a beacon for those on the vessel.

And oh! how anxiously the poor fellow watched that sail, as he clung to his signal pole and shaded his eyes from the declining sun with one hand.

"Yes, yes," he muttered, "it is approaching! I will be saved. The sail grows larger each moment. Oh, this is the happiest moment of my life! They are bearing down upon the island. Let me see; that is from the southeast. But dear me, what a big sail she carries! It looks like all one sail. Is it—can it be a ship?"

An hour passed by, the sail drawing nearer, under a whole sail breeze, from the south and east.

Then the boy beheld an outline that gave him some misgivings, intermingled with his supreme joy.

At last all doubt left his mind.

"It is a felucca and not a ship," he muttered. "I wonder what its nationality can be?"

Several hours more passed by, and the moon and stars appeared.

The vessel hove up into the wind, near the entrance through the reefs, a long boat was lowered, filled with black men, and pulled in through the breach in the reefs.

The boy ran down to the shore to meet the new-comers.

But the moment his glance fell upon them, he cried out and recoiled.

For he saw that they were Madagascar Hovas, and in the bow of the boat stood Ranavala, showing them the way.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE HOVAS.

Startled beyond measure, Rob saw instantly that those who were approaching were no friends of his.

Then he ran back, although they had seen him, and crossing the bridge, over the chasm, he got behind a tree from where he watched the men disembarking.

They were light brown fellows, with piercing black eyes, long, straight hair, and wore short skirts, or lambas.

They carried spears, bows and arrows, and many curious, war-like implements, such as clubs covered with small shark's teeth, long bone knives, and a sort of stone hatchet.

There were fully twenty in the boat, and when they were landed it was rowed back to the felucca for more.

The huge lateen sail was lowered from its bamboo yards, and a number of the men ran out some long sweeps.

Ranavala stood in the midst of the group, and Rob heard her chattering in a guttural language with the men, ever and anon pointing toward where the city had been before she went away two years previously.

Her dwarfed figure looked more shrunk up, her lurid black eyes burned with their wonted brilliancy, and her white eyebrows lent her a most forbidding aspect.

She wore a dress of some sort of cloth now, about which her long white hair swept and dragged on the ground at her bare feet like a huge veil.

"How under Heaven did she escape destruction on the raft that night," muttered Rob, in amazement, "and where did she fall in with these Malagash? There is not a chartered island anywhere near here, save the far-distant Ascension Island, upon which Captain Coffin and his crew may have landed when they deserted me and the four men on the burning Hercules. It is also very plain that they have hostile intentions toward me, and have come here with some fixed purpose."

Just then Ranavala left the crowd and walked toward where the boy was standing.

Seeing this, the youth left his covert and approached her.

"Hello!" he exclaimed, crossing the bridge. "You are alive, I see, and have come back to annoy me again."

"Ah!" she observed, with a hideous chuckle of satisfaction, as she paused and glared at the boy. "Yes, I have been fortunate. My raft was thrown upon an island far to the south of here. There I found a city of my people. They are the children of those Hovas who once were in slavery bondage on this island. When they killed the pirate and his crew, their ship was caught in a storm and driven upon the island, where it was wrecked. Some yet survive, and they greeted me kindly."

"Strange fatality!" exclaimed Rob. "And why are you here?"

"I have come back to rid the island of you, and to carry away the treasure down in the crypt."

"Then you will be sadly disappointed in both respects."

"Oh, no! They will surely kill you. I have incited them to do so, and you cannot help yourself."

"Ha, ha, ha! I do not fear them," laughed Rob recklessly, although he had sad misgivings at heart. "See, they are watching me now, and steal toward us. The treasure is gone, Ranavala, you cannot get it."

"Gone!" she echoed. "How mean you?"

"The earthquake demolished the city and hurled the palace to the ground. Its huge blocks of fallen masonry now cover the entrance to its underground chambers."

The hag started upon hearing this, and Rob saw her make a motion to the men.

"They will dig a way into the heart of the mountain," she said, after a pause. "They will not be thwarted so easily, and now they will attack you!"

Rob had seen them gliding forward, and another boat load of them coming ashore from the felucca.

Seeing that Ranavala had signaled them to attack him, Rob suddenly formed a plan of action.

The old woman stood within ten yards of him, and was narrowly eyeing his every action.

Before she could divine his intention, though, he suddenly sprang toward her, and as she turned to run he seized her.

The Hovas observed his action, and giving utterance to a peculiar cry of rage, they rushed toward him in a compact body, brandishing their weapons.

Snatching Ranavala up in his arms, and paying no attention to her cries and struggles, the boy ran across the bridge with her.

When he gained the other side he flung her down upon the ground, and fell flat upon his face.

It was fortunate he did so, for a shower of spears and arrows flew over his head, whizzing by with such sharp, sibilant hisses as to make Rob shudder.

The next instant the boy was upon his feet, and sped away along the brink of the chasm, going southward. The Madagascars swerved to the right and ran after him, without knowing that the rift intervened between them, as this was its narrowest point, and in the two years of its existence its edges had become so overgrown with shrubbery and bushes as to conceal it.

Glancing over his shoulder, and seeing the whole horde in hot pursuit, Rob swiftly turned to the eastward, leaving the chasm at his back, and ran on a dozen paces.

Then he abruptly paused and glanced back.

He was just in time to see the Hovas rush through the shrubbery, and with wild cries of horror, go crashing down into the yawning earthquake rift!

So closely were they grouped, so hot after him, and so intent, they had not seen their danger until they plunged headlong into it, going down to a certain doom.

It was dreadful to see so many men perish at one fell swoop, for not a soul remained to tell the tale.

Yet it saved Rob Selcraig from certain destruction.

Then he ran back to Ranavala.

She was just arising to her feet.

"You come with me!" exclaimed the boy, seizing her by the arm roughly, and detaining her. "If you dare to move so much as a finger without my permission, I'll kill you on the spot! Do you hear?"

The hag had seen the catastrophe which befell her companions, and a great fear of Rob arose in her breast.

She saw that the boy was desperate.

"Spare my life, and I will do as you order," she replied in tremulous tones, her black eyes rolling and her limbs quaking.

"Then remain here until I come back," said Rob.

She nodded, and he drew the ax from his belt.

Then he hurried over to the bridge, and chopping off the ends of the logs he sent the whole structure crashing down into the maw of the rent earth.

Ranavala had been edging away, in hopes of making her escape, but he caught her, and telling her to proceed to the ruined city, he followed close after her.

There were only two ways for the Malagash to reach the half of the island upon which he was located, and they were by rowing to the shore inside the reefs, or by forming another bridge across the chasm.

As it was very likely they would discover the rift and row around, the boy made up his mind that he would only have to guard against such a catastrophe.

He certainly expected that they would ruin his boat; and had it not been anchored near the exit to the sea, he would have embarked and fled.

There was now only one chance for him, and that was to hide himself up in the mountain, with Ranavala, for if he licensed her to return to them, she, knowing all about the island, would guide them to any hiding-place he might select.

The most secure place he could think of was the water cavern up on the mountain, where Ranavala had tried to

send him over the fall, and thither he made his way with her as fast as possible.

As they went up the mountain there came a sudden jar and a muffled rumbling noise like the distant discharge of a tremendous battery of artillery.

Rob's cheek blanched, and Ranavala uttered a cry.

"The earthquake again!" she screamed.

"I don't care for a million earthquakes now!" said the boy, doggedly. "I may as well perish one way as another, so come right on; I won't turn back."

"No, no!" muttered the old woman in affright.

"You must, do you hear! I am your master now!"

"Rash boy! You are going to a certain death."

"It makes no difference, I tell you; so come on."

He caught the trembling beldame by the arm, and although the ground was trembling beneath their feet with a sickening motion, he forced her along.

When they reached the cavern, Rob cut strips from her dress and tied her hands and feet.

Then, leaving her on the floor, he went out, and securing a place of observation, he watched all night.

By the moonlight he saw fully fifty more of the Hovas assembled on the shore, having disembarked from the felucca, and scattering, they went all over the other section of the island, when they discovered the rent in the ground into which their friends fell.

Then they returned to the shore by the time morning broke in the east, and lighting several fires, Rob saw them sit around in a circle and hold a consultation.

When daylight came, he saw them go out on his boat and swarm all over it, inspecting everything on board. Then they left it and boarded the felucca, where they remained until nightfall, half a league from the reefs.

Rob secured some fruit and berries for himself and his prisoner, and watching all night again he saw they had hit upon the plan of rowing to the section of the island upon which he had secured himself.

The whole crowd landed and scattered all over, armed with all their implements of war, in a hunt for him.

Securing a lot of fruit, Rob retreated into the cavern.

There he remained two days undiscovered.

In four days he had not gained a wink of sleep.

The boy was exhausted by his endless vigil.

On the evening of the fifth day he succumbed and fell into a heavy doze, despite his best efforts to remain awake.

Ranavala was watching him, with a triumphant expression.

Assured that he was fast asleep, at last, she slipped out of the ropes of cloth, with which Rob had bound her.

She had only been waiting for this opportunity.

During her four days of imprisonment, she had slyly been at work sawing at her bonds, upon a sharp stone, and but very little exertion was needed to sever them entirely.

She burst them in two, loosened her ankles, and five minutes later she crept out of the cavern, with the silence of a shadow, and vanished in the darkness.

When Rob awoke, he found himself in an upright position, bound hand and foot, and his body lashed to the palm trunk of his signal pole, at the lookout station.

Heaped all around him was a mass of wood, which had

been ignited, and as the moon arose in the sky, he saw all the Hovas grouped around him.

The boy's heart sank, for he saw that he was a prisoner, and that he was about to be burned to death!

CHAPTER XVII.

THE VOLCANO'S ERUPTION.

Rob Selcraig was bound so tightly that he could not get away from the palm, and Ranavala was the one who had set the torch to the heap of fagots around him.

When the Hovas saw that the boy had regained his faculties, after the long sleep he had, ensuing his four nights and days incessant watching for them, they set up a fiendish crying and howling.

"Oh, I am doomed!" thought the boy. "While I slept the hag made her escape, and brought the Madagascans into the cave after me. What shall I do now?"

He could do nothing but view the dancing and yelling horde all around him, and accept his fate with resignation.

"Ah!" cried the dwarfed old woman, with a sibilant laugh, "you are awake, are you? So you see we have got the best of you now, and nothing can save you."

"Shut up, you old croaker!" exclaimed the boy.

Ranavala laughed and pointed off the rocky bluff at the pirate's island, which was now bathed in an effulgence of mellow moonlight, and said in her hoarse tones:

"Look! It will be your last! The island is mine again!"

The boy trembled, and glanced around.

Far below him he saw the great chasm dividing the island, and in the offing rode the Hova's felucca, and his pretty little sloop the Hercules.

The ruined city, with its fallen walls, palace and houses, the dried up lake, his own home, its stockyard and farm—in fact, all was in plain view, looking off the high bluff, and afar in the distance he saw the burning island.

Then the smoke from the fire began to roll up around him shutting out the view, blinding and choking him.

"God help me!" he groaned in anguish.

Ranavala burst into a loud, horrible laugh, and the Hovas began to chant a death song of singular rhythm over him, as the hot flames began to dart up around their bound prisoner's body, scorching his clothing, blistering his skin, and filling him with excruciating agony.

Suddenly there sounded a terrific explosion.

It came so suddenly and with such a noise that the whole island trembled and every one was thrown down.

The Hovas began to yell, and the tree to which Rob was tied fell with a crash upon them, scattering the embers of the fire and crushing many of the men.

Fortunately Rob was on the upper side, else he would have been mashed to a jelly beneath its weight.

A thick darkness suddenly obscured the sky as if from a cloud.

All around there were fitful puffs of steam and gases, exuding from cracks in the earth, and above there was a

frightful jarring and roaring noise at the crater of the mountain.

The mephetic gases were sulphuric in their odor.

The cloud Rob saw was a dense volume of vapor, ashes and scoriæ, which had been blown, in a fine dust, fully ten miles into the air, by the sudden eruption.

It overhung the island like a sable pall, the crater kept vomiting more and more, with thunderous explosions, and the high altitude winds catching it, began to drive it along to the eastward over the sea.

"The end of the world has come!" shrieked Ranavala.

Rob glanced at her with a woeful face.

"This is a retribution of Heaven upon you!" he cried.

She glared at him like a fiend, and snatching up a long knife of bone, she staggered toward him.

"It shall not cheat me out of you!" she howled.

Then the boy shuddered, as he saw her stab at him with the knife; but another shock came, and hurled her down.

She fell across his body, and the Hovas began to rush away down the mountain side, like mad men.

The knife's keen edge slid over Rob's bonds, and severed them so that he entirely freed himself with a little exertion.

Before Ranavala could rise to carry out her demoniacal purpose, the boy started up from the tree-trunk—free!

The hag rushed at him uttering a terrible cry.

Her knife was upraised, and her left arm was bent and pressed across her forehead, over her eyes.

Rob sprang to one side.

He was about in time, for just then she lunged at him, and a hoarse cry pealed from her thick lips as she saw how she had missed her mark.

The impetuosity with which she had flung herself forward carried her to the edge of the bluff.

She tried to stop herself, but could not.

Then she tottered forward, the earth on the edge of the cliff crumbled beneath her feet, and unable to save herself, she fell over the cliff.

A wild and terrible cry burst from her lips.

Rob, too, could hardly suppress an ejaculation of intense horror at the terrible fate which overtook her.

He started forward a step.

He was too late, though, to save her.

Down she fell into the darkness, and the last he saw of her was her lurid black eyes, half encircled by the white eyebrows, glaring at him as they bulged from their sockets, and her long white hair streaming around her dwarfed body like a funeral shroud.

"May Heaven have mercy upon her soul!" he muttered.

Then he turned shuddering away.

Environed by the deadliest peril himself, he could not help a feeling of dread and compassion for Ranavala.

Her ending had been so horrible it thrilled him.

He was soon recalled to a realization of his own situation by hearing the rumbling around him increasing in volume, and by seeing another cloud of dust hurled up into the sky from the mouth of the crater.

This was followed by a lurid glare of flame, and as he turned to run down the mountain side, a terrific heat began to spread around, despite the fact that a stiff wind was blowing in the opposite direction.

All the Hovas had vanished, and he heard them far down below him in the valley, yelling and talking, and then there came a terrific rending of the earth.

The boy was thrown down, but he got upon his feet again, and while running at the top of his speed, he glanced back over his shoulder at the mountain.

A huge, gaping hole had opened on the north side like a mighty sore, and it commenced to eject a torrent of burning lava and scoriæ, which began to roll down the mountain side, emitting an awful heat, toward the sea.

This seemed to be the precursor of a final outburst of the volcano, for the mountain began to split with a thunderous noise on all sides, the huge vertical fissures radiating from the center of the caldera and extending down the sides in all directions.

From these fissures the glowing lava began to pour and a ghastly reflection shot up to the sky, illuminating the murky clouds of dust hanging there.

It seemed then as if clouds of brilliant fire were sweeping across the heavens, as the upper currents of air swept the dust along fully fifty miles before it fell into the sea in showers of ashes.

Had those dust clouds fallen upon a city as big as New York, they would have buried it under thirty feet of solid ashes and cinders of pumice, visculated lava, and scoriæ looking like the slag from an iron furnace.

Rob was almost overcome.

He ran as he never ran before, and he panted for breath and perspired until he was drenched, for the heat was momentarily intensifying.

The earth was shaking under his feet incessantly now, and carbonic gases swept in clouds about him, breathing which fumes he nearly succumbed to unconsciousness.

Several times he was thrown down from the convulsive throes of the earth, and several times more he fell, overcome by the noxious gases he inhaled.

But with a dogged determination not to perish if he could save himself, he got up and pressed on.

"If my boat yet remains," he gasped, as he struggled on, "there yet will be a faint chance for my salvation. I may be able to get on board and sail away to the open sea. This island is being destroyed, and within an hour may be a charred desert of heat, ready to sink forever beneath the sea from which it no doubt rose, as it is subsiding. Ha! There comes a stream of burning lava, rolling down after me like a sea of fire, and if I do not hasten it will engulf me!"

The mountain had opened over his head, and the fiery stream came rolling down a hundred yards broad, its awful heat burning everything in its path, while aloft it sent a tremendous glow to the sky.

The mighty clouds of black dust overhanging the island made it as dark as Erebus above, yet the reflection of the volcano's flames lit up the scene as if by day, and sent its radiations of light fifty miles over the sea in all directions with weird, fantastic beams.

Down the rugged mountain raced the boy, and panting, exhausted, and with a bursting brain, he reached the table-land below and started for the sea shore.

Looking out toward the sea he saw that the Hovas, or

rather what few of them reached the shore, had gone out to their boat, and were hoisting the huge lateen sail on their felucca, preparatory to putting out to sea.

He saw that his boat was riding at anchor in its accustomed place, and the tide was on the turn.

The boy rushed into the water.

It was becoming boiling hot, and off to the southward he saw that the tiny island was one huge, roaring mass of flames, that shot far up in the sky with a crackling noise and an intense heat.

Millions of sparks and great masses of living fire were flying through the air, and falling into the sea all around, while the groaning and rumbling going on inside of the island were so great that it seemed as if a mighty power of explosion was going on and the island must blow up.

When he had waded out beyond his depth, he swam through the hot water and finally reached his boat.

Not waiting to raise the anchor, he cut the rope and hastily hoisted the mainsail.

Then he raised the jib and seizing the tiller, he tacked out against the wind, for the opening in the reefs.

There was plenty of wind, but he feared that the showers of sparks would set the sails on fire.

Off in the distance, the felucca was bearing away to the windward, with all sail set and her crew on deck.

The boy glanced back at the island.

He was leaving it forever, but it was with a sense of relief and satisfaction, for it was now a mass of flames, as the volcano was in a full state of eruption.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONCLUSION.

All through that eventful night Robinson Crusoe, Jr., had a hard time of it, being obliged to manage his boat and to extinguish the flames, as the flying sparks set fire to his boat, and a strong west wind had come up.

The boy was more dead than alive, and ere morning's dawn he became so despondent over his fate that he did not care what became of him.

The sloop behaved splendidly.

There was a fine roll on the sea, and sailing with a three-quarter wind, he made twelve knots an hour, shaping his course to the northeast.

"Without chart, map or compass," he murmured, "I can only bear away on a certain course and trust to God to throw me in the way of some vessel. If I only knew which direction Ascension Island lay, I'd make for it, but I don't; so I will have to go whithersoever fate leads me, and hope for the best."

He did not have the utmost faith in his little boat in a heavy sea in midocean, but it was now his only reliance, so he became utterly indifferent as to whether the planks would hold together beneath him or not, as he left the volcanic island further and further astern with all its horrors.

Within a few hours he had sailed out of the awful heat radiated by the volcano, and finally got beyond the limit of falling sparks.

Then he felt comparatively safe and free from all danger, save the natural perils of the sea.

Rob was frightfully exhausted, and when day began to break over the eastern sea he lashed the tiller fast, and going into the cabin he lay on a bunk and soon fell into a dull stupor.

It lasted until far into the ensuing day, and when he finally aroused himself he took a bath in the shimmering sea and refreshed himself.

With new enervation his hopes revived, and the love for life returned to him, as it does to all men.

He found, though, that he was in a dangerous predicament, for the Malagash had eaten most all his fruit and drank the biggest part of the water in a cask he had down in the cabin.

"I have only enough for three days," he thought, "and when it is gone I will certainly perish."

It was a glorious day, the sun shining down from a cloudless sky, and a fair wind blowing, it having veered around to the southeast.

Rob had fishlines on board, and a flint and steel, so he spent the day sailing along the course he had mapped out, and fishing to replenish his larder.

Several days thus passed by, when the boy's boat got into a current that seemed to carry him to the southeast.

The fact was the Hercules had crossed the S. E. trade drift, and was running back to the juncture of the southern connecting current, where it joins the Agulhas.

He seemed to realize this, for he changed the course of his boat more to the northward.

Had he kept on the way he was going, he would have been carried to the southern coast of Africa.

As it was, he sailed parallel with the coast, at a distance of some eight hundred miles off shore.

He had no desire to make land at an uninhabited shore, preferring to keep plenty of sea room, and by getting into the southeast trade winds, run the chance of meeting with some northern-bound vessel.

Moreover, he knew that it was a desperate chance, for but few vessels ever passed across the course he was then pursuing in their oceanic voyages.

At the end of the fifth day all his water was used up, and the fruit was all eaten.

He caught fish from the sea, and prayed for a shower of rain; but as it was then the dry season, not a shower came, and he began to get restless.

He now had but one recourse, and that was to distill the salt water over the fire he had in the cabin, his utensils for that purpose being of the poorest and meanest description.

Obliged to abandon his care of the boat, in a constant endeavor to get water and fish, to keep his body and soul together, the boy's plight became most deplorable as the days went by.

Fortunately the wind and weather remained fair, and the little Hercules made good progress with its tiller lashed fast, else the boy would not have survived.

At the end of three weeks after he left the island he was suddenly taken sick.

All the hardships he had gone through were too much for his constitution, and he was forced to give in, hard as

he battled against it; and, taking to his bunk, he fell into a high fever.

All hope was now gone.

He was prepared to die.

The weary days and nights dragged by, no food or water passing his parched lips, the daylight and the darkness being the same to him, and the only wish in his mind being that he would die quickly, to end the suffering he was then enduring.

The little boat drifted at the mercy of the elements, and at the close of the fourth day Rob had grown so weak and miserable, that he could hardly stand to glance out the deadlights at the sea.

Then a change came over the scene.

As he lay there, thinking over all that had passed in the five years of his exile upon the island he was suddenly startled by hearing a human voice cry:

"Boat, ahoy! Boat, ahoy!"

"Oh—God!" he shouted, starting up and trembling all over.

"Boat, ahoy! Boat, ahoy!" came the voice again.

"Am I dreaming?" he gasped, wildly. "Is that a human voice?"

"Boat, ahoy! Boat, ahoy!" repeated the voice.

A great sob swelled up from Rob's heart, and forgetting his weakness—forgetting his sickness—forgetting everything in the one glad thought that succor had at last come, he bounded from the bunk, and staggering out on deck, he seized the mast, and glanced around.

The sun was setting in the west, a misty twilight overhung the sea, and close hauled on the wind a cable's length from his port bow, Rob saw a large, noble, full-rigged ship bearing along with him.

At the lee-rail were clustered the whole crew, all gazing in surprise at the Hercules and the oddly-dressed, white-faced boy who had come staggering up on her deck.

"Help!" he cried, faintly. "In Heaven's name, help me!"

"Haul to and I will board yer!" came the reply.

Rob cut the tiller free, and his boat ran up into the wind's eye, the ship also going up, and coming about it ran alongside of the sloop.

Rob saw a man at the rail, with a rope in his hand, and then the stranger cried lustily:

"Stan' by ter make fast, my hearty!"

"Ay, sir. Let it come!" replied Rob.

He was almost wild with joy, only this feeling of happiness sustaining him to help himself.

The rope whizzed through the air, he caught it, made it fast to his mast, and a few moments later the two boats were side by side.

Then the man who had spoken to Rob jumped down upon the deck of the little sloop with a curious look.

But the moment the boy caught a good view of his face he rushed toward him, and cried excitedly:

"Oh, merciful Providence, it is Captain Fred Coffin!"

"Blast me ef I know you!" ejaculated the startled man.

"I am Rob Selcraig, your former clerk on the Hercules."

"Why, so you are! But good heavens, wot do this mean?"

In a few words Rob apprised him of what had happened, and in return the captain told Rob his adventures.

He and his crew, supposing Rob and the others had perished down below on the Hercules, had taken to the boats, and made tracks for Ascension Island.

They landed there safely, met a homeward bound trader, and shipped back to New York, where a report was made to the owners of what happened to the ill-fated ship. The vessel Captain Coffin then commanded had been fitted out for him, and he had made several voyages to Africa in her.

She was a vessel of 2,000 tons burden, and as fine a clipper as ever sailed the seas.

He had been under the impression that the old Hercules had burned to the water's edge, and foundered.

Rob's story filled him with amazement, and after the boy was taken on board the ship, and given proper nourishment, he told his story in detail.

Captain Coffin and his officers could hardly accredit the recital; but when the golden ballast was transferred from the little sloop, and an inspection made of the tiny vessel, they could not doubt it any longer.

The sloop was then scuttled, and the ship went on its way, homeward bound, while Rob was put under the care of the steward, who was somewhat proficient at doctoring.

Within a week the boy was entirely well again, and, attired in a decent suit of clothing, his hair cut, he looked like himself once more.

The enormous treasure with which he had his boat ballasted had been packed in several empty water casks, and was locked up down below for him.

The crew of the ship and all its officers were mostly the old hands from the wrecked Hercules, and evinced their delight at the boy's salvation by every way imaginable.

He told his remarkable story to them all once more, and elicited comments of the most intense amazement from one and all over its utter peculiarity.

The ship made good headway, being favored by fair winds, and in due course of time she reached New York, and the boy Robinson Crusoe went ashore with his enormous treasure and sold it.

The proceeds made him enormously rich, and not forgetting those who had been so kind to him, he made them each a handsome present in money. The sea had treated Rob Selcraig so badly he resolved never to venture upon it again.

Accordingly, he settled down in New York, and got married, being perfectly content to live all his adventures through again simply in reminiscences.

Like his ancestor, he had escaped a great peril in his life, and had no desire to tempt fate again in that direction, as his family seemed to have been one that was peculiarly destined.

And so we must regretfully leave Robinson Crusoe, Jr., in a safe haven at last; and his island home, with its vast treasure buried beneath the waves of the Atlantic, only a dream of the past.

THE END.

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